



Written by [Angeline Tan](#) on October 20, 2023

## Biden Requests \$61.4 Billion for Kyiv

The White House sent an appropriations request for security spending worth slightly more than \$105 billion to Congress on the morning of October 20. Most of the security spending package, \$61.4 billion, would be channeled to Ukraine.

The Biden administration is reportedly attempting to circumvent Republican objections to persistent aid for the Kyiv regime by linking assistance for Kyiv to support for Israel, Taiwan, and the U.S. border, hot-button topics among GOP lawmakers.



AP Images

Israel will obtain \$14.3 billion of the proposed package for its war effort against Palestinian terrorist group Hamas. The remaining money, just under \$30 billion, will be earmarked for Taiwan and wider Indo-Pacific security, as well as for the southern border. Such spending is intended for the 2024 fiscal year, which ends next September.

Republican lawmakers have been increasingly reluctant about long-term aid for Ukraine as its conflict with Moscow has shown no signs of abating. Previously, Kyiv's Western backers had expressed optimism for the "summer counteroffensive," for which they supplied advanced Western-made tanks and other arms. Thus far, Ukrainian troops have made dismal progress against Russian forces.

Last month, the issue of Ukraine aid became a locus of dispute for the U.S. House of Representatives, as it debated a stopgap spending bill to forestall a government shutdown. The final version of the bill failed to earmark any money for Kyiv.

Besides, Kevin McCarthy lost the role of U.S. House speaker, after lawmakers slammed him for inking a clandestine agreement with the Biden administration to keep aid going, and voted with the Democrats to depose him. For over two weeks, legislative activity in the chamber has been at a roadblock, as Republicans grapple with who should be the next House speaker.

Since the violent assault by terrorist group Hamas on civilians in Israel on October 7, clashes between Israel and Palestinian militants have escalated. In light of these developments in the Middle East, Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky has voiced fears that global attention could be diverted from Ukraine to the Middle East, slamming Russia for being responsible for Hamas' attack on Israel, without providing any proof to substantiate his claims.

Last week, Israel reportedly refused Zelensky's offer to visit Israel alongside U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken. Ukraine's foreign minister, Dmitry Kuleba, declared to Italian daily *La Repubblica* that Zelensky's suggested trip was postponed instead of being dismissed.

On October 18, Russian President Vladimir Putin declared that while Western stances on the Russo-Ukrainian conflict seemed to be heading in the right direction, Kyiv must cease its "theatrics" and get rid of legal impediments before peace talks can happen.

"If the Ukrainian side really wants negotiations to happen, it should be done without any theatrics,"



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Putin told journalists at a press conference in China.

The Russian leader pointed out that Ukraine must eradicate a law which has banned peace talks with Russia as long as Putin remained in power.

Zelensky signed the ban more than a year ago, as his government sought to attain a military victory over Russia with Western military support.

Furthermore, Putin insisted that Kyiv had little to show its Western backers after months of combat, pointing out that some Western officials were seemingly shifting from their original statements of defeating Russia.

"This transformation leads in the right direction," Putin declared. "I commend that. But it is not enough."

Putin then broached EU foreign policy chief Josep Borrell as an illustration of a Western figure changing his position.

During a visit to China last week, Borrell announced during a press conference with Foreign Minister Wang Yi that "we count on China to support Ukraine peace negotiations."

In context, Beijing has long called for diplomatic resolution of the Ukraine crisis since Kyiv's conflict with Moscow erupted in February 2022.

Putin made his remarks on Ukraine when questioned by journalists to offer details of his discussions with Hungarian Prime Minister Viktor Orbán, whom he met in Beijing on October 17.

Regarding his talks with the Hungarian leader, Putin said he had not told Orbán anything that went against Moscow's public position on the Ukraine conflict.

Addressing claims that Orbán was "pro-Russian," Putin replied that the former was "pro-Hungarian," hinting that critics were envious of his "courage to defend the interests of his people," unlike many European politicians.

Putin and Orbán were both in China to attend the Belt and Road Forum for International Cooperation, and met on the sidelines of the event.

Prior to the fatal Hamas assault on October 7, the United States and its NATO allies were very preoccupied with Ukraine and helping it defeat Russia. At the moment, as Western establishment media outlets are awash with news from the Middle East, attention has been shifting away from Kyiv and toward Israel, Palestine, and Iran.

It is noteworthy that prior to October 7, support for Ukraine had already shown signs of declining. Ukraine's faltering [counteroffensive](#) and [dwindling public support](#) for Ukraine's conflict with Russia meant that Kyiv was already facing difficulties maintaining support from its European backers, as well as American political leaders. To make matters worse, the West lacks the [manufacturing capacity](#) to support large-scale ground conflict in Ukraine, as reported by Bloomberg.

In particular, Zelensky's failed counteroffensive has drastically worn out Kyiv's manpower, resources, and reputation in the West without making significant gains on the battlefield. A NATO official even suggested that Kyiv would have to [concede territory](#) to Moscow to eventually work out a solution to the Russo-Ukrainian conflict, incensing Kyiv.

Although Israel and Ukraine may require different types of munitions from the West's stockpile, owing



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to the different natures of the conflicts, the huge Israeli defense and political lobby in the United States may clash against a smaller Ukrainian lobby.

It would be unlikely that Israel would be neglected by any incumbent or potential U.S. president, in light of next year's presidential elections. For instance, presidential hopeful candidate Robert F. Kennedy, Jr. has vocally supported Israel's retaliation against Hamas while voicing reservations on continued aid to Ukraine.

During a recent [interview with Bloomberg](#), Chatham House CEO Bronwen Maddox summarized the situation that Ukraine has been facing since October 7 when she said, "Given a choice between Israel and Ukraine, the US would in a heartbeat choose Israel." She proceeded to add that even if Washington was not facing such a crossroads right now, she "can understand why President Zelensky might be worried as he was already battling to retain American attention."



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