



Written by [Angeline Tan](#) on December 22, 2023

## Blinken Claims U.S. Has “Clear Plan” for Ukraine as Aid Package Stalls

During his end-of-year press conference at the State Department on Wednesday, December 20, US Secretary of State Antony Blinken claimed that Washington had a clear strategy for the future of Ukraine but cautioned that financial support was on the decline as an aid package stalls in Congress.

Moreover, Blinken admitted that 2023 has been “a year of profound tests” as Washington tries to tackle various global challenges in Ukraine, Gaza, and elsewhere.

However, amid faltering enthusiasm to continue to support Ukraine in its nearly two-year conflict with Russia, especially among Republicans, Blinken told reporters that Washington harbored a concerted strategy for the future of Ukraine.



AP Images  
Antony Blinken

“We have a very clear plan,” he said, “to make sure that Ukraine can stand on its own two feet — militarily, economically, democratically — so that these levels of support and assistance will no longer be necessary.”

The first of which, he proposed, was to free up additional financial aid for Ukraine so that Kyiv could address its immediate challenges. “We have to help Ukraine get through the next period of time, get through this winter, get through the spring and summer,” Blinken said.

He elaborated, “I’m also focused on the fact that they have their own plans to continue.”

Pressure from Democrats, and even Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky, has so far failed to convince Republicans in Congress to rubber-stamp a \$50 billion military aid package for Kyiv.

Rather, voices in the legislature have demanded that the White House focus on border security provisions as a prerequisite for a Ukraine deal.

Without approval from Congress, Blinken warned that financial aid will quickly run thin. “There is no magic pot we can draw from,” he said. “The assistance, the support that we have designated for Ukraine, that is running out, that is running down. We are nearly out of money. And we’re running out of time.”

Blinken also stated that the United States will continue efforts to urge other countries to provide further support for Kyiv, and ensure that Russia’s operation will be a “strategic failure.”

Meanwhile, the Ukrainian government is insisting that all men of fighting age who left the country after the outbreak of the conflict with Russia return and join the military, Ukrainian Defense Minister Rustem Umerov told *Bild*.



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Previously, Zelensky said his commanders have suggested mobilizing an additional “450,000-500,000 individuals.”

Regarding those who have fled, Umerov highlighted to *Bild* that “all Ukrainian men of military age — from 25 to 60 years — are to receive invitations to report to recruitment centers of the Ukrainian Armed Forces.”

Anyone who ignores the “invitations” will face sanctions, the defense minister warned, although he added that the details of potential penalties were still under discussion.

Umerov made known his lack of sympathy for draft dodgers, maintaining that “it’s not a punishment to defend and serve your country. It’s an honor.”

Ukraine closed its borders for males of military age shortly after Russia began its military operation in the country in February 2022, although many were still able to flee overseas.

Based on *Bild*’s report, 221,571 Ukrainian men arrived in Germany after the outbreak of the conflict, with 189,484 of them still in the country.

The outlet portrayed the announcement by Umerov as “politically explosive,” warning it “could have serious consequences for hundreds of thousands of Ukrainian men living abroad.”

Shortly after the publication of Umerov’s interview, Strana.ua reported that the defense minister’s three children have U.S. passports. According to the outlet, although Umerov’s son and daughter were listed as Ukrainians in Umerov’s tax statement in 2020, they were described as American citizens in 2022. The minister’s second daughter also obtained a U.S. passport soon after her birth, Strana.ua added.

On December 19, Russian Defense Minister Sergey Shoigu said that nearly 400,000 Ukraine troops have been killed or wounded since the start of the fighting, putting Kyiv’s daily losses at around 600 men.

Moreover, in an opinion piece for *Focus* magazine, retired German Air Force Colonel and prominent military analyst Ralph D. Thiele claimed that around 800 Ukrainian troops are being killed and wounded daily amid the conflict with Russia.

Thiele, who used to serve in the personal staff of NATO Supreme Allied Commander Europe, and who is presently heading the Political-Military Society, EuroDefense (Germany), and StratByrd Consulting think tanks, called Ukraine’s “highly motivated defense” and its counteroffensive as “a thing of the past,” stating that the counteroffensive came at a “high price” for Kyiv.

Ukraine also needs more personnel to be able to rotate its troops on the front line, so that “exhausted soldiers” may recover and units may replenish their materiel, he added.

Kyiv’s manpower and hardware are “significantly worn out,” he said. “Western weapons systems are not miracle weapons and are wearing out,” the analyst continued.

The deteriorating battlefield situation and faltering Western support for Kyiv are “eating away at the morale” of the Ukrainian troops, who “will have to save ammunition in a war of attrition and endure slaughter at the front without rest and without a greater sense of achievement,” Thiele highlighted.

While Russia has also lost “a large number of soldiers and huge amounts of materiel” during the conflict, “it has much more of both than Ukraine,” he contended.



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“Step by step, Russia’s superiority in the conflict with Ukraine is becoming more visible,” the analyst acknowledged. Moscow’s “strategy of attrition” is “taking effect” in terms of personnel, materiel, ammunition and morale, Thiele said.

This week, a report by *Die Welt*’s correspondent in Kyiv, Paul Ronzheimer, indicated that the Ukrainian Armed Forces are experiencing a shortage of personnel to train in the operation of Leopard 2 tanks.

In his report, Ronzheimer pointed out that Kyiv’s plans to deploy half a million people had caused “shock” among Ukrainians and revealed how “difficult the situation is for Ukraine.”

The journalist asserted that Ukraine’s shortage of troops and difficulties mobilizing additional forces are problems that have existed for a long time. As one instance of these long-standing issues, Ronzheimer stated that training centers in Germany for training Ukrainian soldiers to operate Leopard 2 tanks are currently running at half capacity.

“This means that at the moment there are not enough people for training, and if this war lasts longer, it will naturally cause problems. Because in the end everything depends on how many soldiers each side has at its disposal,” Ronzheimer said.

Ukraine has conducted various waves of mobilization since 2014, and officially declared martial law in February 2022. However, Kyiv’s mobilization efforts have been hampered by massive corruption, which prompted Zelensky to purge the heads of all regional draft offices from their positions in August.

During an expanded meeting of Russia’s Defense Ministry’s Board on December 19, Russian President Vladimir Putin, who chaired the meeting, emphasized that “we can say with confidence that our troops have the initiative” on the front line with Ukraine. “In essence, we are doing what we consider necessary, what we want. Wherever ... commanders decide active defense is best, it takes place. And where it is needed, we improve our positions,” Putin stated.



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