

Much of Washington's \$54 Billion Aid for Ukraine Will be Stolen by Corrupt Officials

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US aid to Ukraine has reached astonishing heights ever since Russia launched its military operation on February 24, with continuous streams of arms, ammunition and intelligence provisions flowing into the country. At a time when living costs is becoming increasingly unbearable for the average American, Congress is poised to approve more than \$40 billion in emergency funding to support Ukraine, an amount nearly three times greater than what the US has already committed. However, the efficiency of this aid is put into question considering systemic corruption in Ukraine and the short survival rate of Western weapons once they enter the country.

If Congress were to approve \$40 billion, along with the \$13.6 billion passed in March, the combined \$53.7 billion is about 81% of Russia's 2021 defense budget. Although it appears that the US is making a serious and committed effort for Ukrainian forces to overcome the Russian military, the difference this military aid would make is questionable since much of it will be destroyed by Russian aviation and missile strikes upon entry into Ukraine.

In March, Congress authorized \$13.6 billion in aid, of which \$6.9 billion will be sent through traditional foreign aid channels. This aid is supposed to go toward strengthening Ukraine's security and economy, food assistance, healthcare and emergency assistance to refugees, as well as weapons. It is expected that the extra \$40 billion, which will likely be approved by Congress, will be spent much in the same manner.

Ukraine has [long been](#) one of the [more corrupt countries](#) in the world, and there is no indication this has reversed just because of the war. In this way, it can be expected that much of the \$53.7 billion will be stolen in corruption schemes orchestrated by Ukraine's military, oligarchs and government officials. What is known is that \$13.9 billion will indirectly go to the Kiev government so that ministries can continue to operate. \$4.4 billion in emergency food aid will go to Ukraine (and other countries too). Finally, \$900 million will go to housing, English language training, and trauma treatment for Ukrainian refugees.

According to The New York Times, the US has shown unprecedented generosity towards Kiev when Congress does not want to carry out critical economic stimulation measures. This is at a time when inflation is reaching unprecedented heights, fuel hits new records and grocery prices are unaffordable.

On May 12, Republican Senator Rand Paul opposed the bill to provide Ukraine with additional support. As he said: "We cannot save Ukraine by dooming the US economy." None-the-less, despite Rand Paul's opposition, the Senate will likely pass the aid bill as he is the only one who has spoken out against it.

Although the aid package undoubtedly appears generous, Washington never makes such actions just out of charity and it can be expected that all aid is conditional. In early May, Biden signed the Ukraine Democracy Defense Lend-Lease Act of 2022 to expedite the delivery of US arms shipments to Ukraine.

The Lend-Lease Act was used during World War II to supply weapons to allied countries, partly on a reciprocal basis. The US supplied weapons, strategic materials, and food to Britain, the Soviet Union, the de Gaulle government in France, and China. But due to these aid packages, the UK owed \$31.4 billion and the Soviet Union \$10.9 billion. Although Washington canceled the UK's debt, Russia only finished paying off the loan in 2006.

Kiev is not thinking about having to pay back all its debt as it expects that the West will cover the costs seeing as the Ukrainian economy has been struggling due to rampant corruption. Washington will inevitably claim compensation for the Lend-Lease Act – whether it be with the supply of cheap agricultural products, rights to build military bases on Ukrainian territory, the implementation of projects that benefit Western companies, or in a plethora of other ways.

Through such conditional aid, Ukraine is expected to continue its war effort against Russia instead of finding a peaceful solution. However, this will only prolong the suffering in Ukraine as this aid will make little difference considering a lot of the humanitarian aid will be stolen by corrupt officials and military aid will likely be destroyed by Russian forces as it enters the country – but Ukrainian taxpayers will still be expected to foot the bill.

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