

Russia Warns US of ‘Direct Military Clash’ If More Arms Sent to Ukraine

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Russia says the United States' decision to ship more weapons to Ukraine poses an "immediate threat" to Moscow's interests and hikes the risk of a direct military confrontation between Russia and the West.

"The supply of military products by the US and its allies not only entails protracted bloodshed and new casualties, but also increases the danger of a direct military clash between Russia and Western countries," Russia's Ambassador to the US Anatoly Antonov said on the Telegram messaging app on Wednesday.

"We perceive this as an immediate threat to the strategic interests of our country," he said, after US President Joe Biden pledged a new \$625-million military aid package to Ukraine on Tuesday.

The US package would include High Mobility Artillery Rocket System (HIMARS) launchers, reportedly used in Ukraine's recent counter-offensives against Russian forces, leading to their withdrawal.

Last week, Washington also unveiled a \$1.1-billion arms package for Ukraine, which included 18 HIMARS launcher systems, accompanying munitions, various types of counter drone systems and radar systems.

But last week's weapons package was funded by the Ukraine Security Assistance Initiative (USAI), meaning the government has to procure the weapons from industry, rather than pulling them from existing US weapons stocks.

The latest announcement would mark more than \$16.8 billion worth of US security military aid to Kiev since Russia began what it calls a "special military operation" in Ukraine back in

February, citing the failure of the US-led NATO military alliance and Kiev to offer Moscow security guarantees it sought in connection with NATO's eastward expansion.

The aid package is the first since the accession to Russian Federation of four former Ukrainian territories — namely Donetsk, Luhansk, Kherson, and Zaporizhzhia — after holding referendums that Russia said overwhelmingly favored the move.

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