

Zelensky Departs Washington Mostly Empty-Handed Amid Mood Shift in West

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By all accounts, Zelensky came away from his Washington visit with nothing new. Biden did announce a fresh \$325 million aid package for Ukraine from already committed funds, but the hoped-for long range missile approval never came (however, more cluster bombs are being sent). And as [we detailed](#) Thursday, House Republican leadership once again failed to move forward on a mere procedural vote for the Pentagon funding bill, due in large part to GOP members rejecting Biden's proposed \$24 billion more in Ukraine aid.

Thursday's package announced by Biden, as Zelensky visited the White House and Capitol Hill, was run-of-the-mill and entirely to be expected. "Today I approved the next tranche of U.S. security assistance to Ukraine including more artillery, more ammunition, more anti-tank weapons and next week, the first U.S. Abrams tanks will be delivered to Ukraine," Biden said.

As for the earlier in the day (Thurs.) meeting with Congressional leaders, House Speaker Kevin McCarthy explained when asked why the Ukrainian leader's request to address Congress was denied, "Zelensky asked for a joint session, we just didn't have time. He's already given a joint session."

Instead in a closed-door meeting, Zelensky later acknowledged he discussed with lawmakers "the battlefield situation and priority defense needs."

But if there is any level of consolation for Kiev, it's seen in the Pentagon announcement which came late in the day Thursday. Facing potential US government shutdown on Oct.1st, given at this point Congress is not expected to pass the 12 appropriations bills needed to fund government operations before next fiscal year, the Pentagon has said it will exempt its operations supporting Ukraine from a shutdown.

The military typically suspends any activities not deemed vital to national security during government shutdowns, thus the DoD is in effect saying Ukraine aid remains “vital to national security”.

“Operation Atlantic Resolve is an excepted activity under a government lapse in appropriations,” Pentagon spokesman Chris Sherwood told *Politico*, in reference to the operational name still used for actions supporting Kiev.

But *Politico* points out a potential shutdown would still negatively impact US [support to Ukraine](#):

Sherwood noted that while DOD’s activities related to Ukraine will continue, furloughs and other activities halted under the shutdown could still have a negative impact.

“Training would happen, but depending on whether or not there were certain personnel that were not able to report for duty, for example, that could have an impact,” said Pentagon spokesperson Brig. Gen. Patrick Ryder on Thursday.

This Pentagon exemption to keep Ukraine-related support active during a government shutdown seems to be the only significant thing Zelensky came away with.

Zelensky visited the US in person, made a speech at the UN, and came home with an amount of ammo so small the Pentagon won't give numbers and a handful of the worst air defense systems currently in use by a major power.

In the Army we called this "getting thrown under the bus."
pic.twitter.com/f8hFVstDud

— Armchair Warlord (@ArmchairW) [September 22, 2023](#)

It appears to have been the main object of discussion when Zelensky met with Secretary of Defense Lloyd Austin in Washington during the trip. The Pentagon said this was “to reaffirm the steadfast US support for Ukraine.”

Meanwhile, *Bloomberg* takes note of Zelensky “showing the strain” amid increasing divisions [among allies](#):

The Ukrainian president allowed a dispute with one of his biggest allies to spin out of control at the United Nations General Assembly this week, and that’s just a hint of the tensions building behind the scenes.

Zelenskiy has been leading his country through Russia’s brutal assault for 19 months, all the time fighting on another front to wring the weapons and finance he needs from his US and European supporters. Now he suspects that President Joe Biden’s commitment is wavering and other leaders may be taking their cue from the US, according to a person who met with him recently.

He grew very emotional at times during that discussion, the person said, and was scathing in his criticism of nations that he said weren’t delivering weapons quickly enough.

Washington's lackluster greeting of Zelensky this week (compared to how he was received in December 2022) came simultaneous to Poland declaring it will no longer arm Ukraine, amid a fierce diplomatic spat over blockage of Ukraine grain imports by Warsaw, to protect Polish farmers.

The Economist is also taking note of the significant mood shift among Western allies...

A "long war" indeed... given a G7 leader from a European country has told reporters this week that the West is prepared for a *years-long* war, something likely to last some six or seven years, according to the quote.

"A senior official from one European G-7 country said the war may last as much as six or seven more years and that allies need to plan financially to continue support for Kyiv for such a long conflict," [Bloomberg](#) wrote.

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