

ADDRESSING THE UKRAINE FUNDING DEBATE

An Urgent Need for a Path to Victory,
Transparency, Accountability,
and a Sustainable Peace

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MIKE GARCIA
California's 27th District



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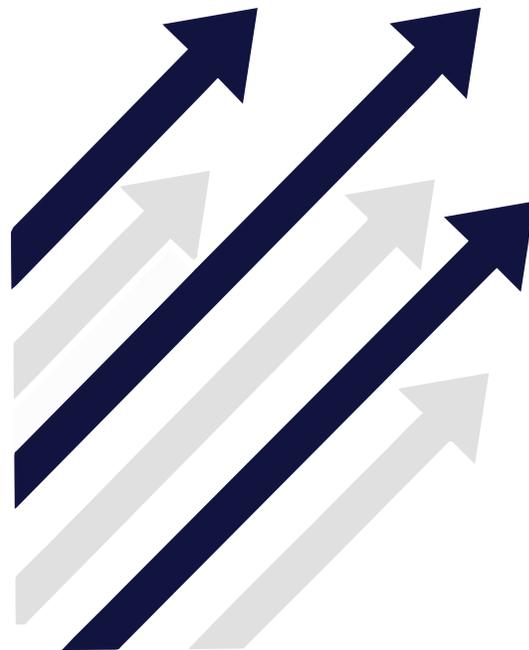
President Biden’s current position of ‘whatever it takes for as long as it takes’ is not a reasonable strategy to win.”

PART I: INTRODUCTION

As Congress debates the annual appropriations bills, President Biden and his administration are waiting in the wings with their request for an additional significant aid package to Ukraine (direct military aid, as well as economic and humanitarian assistance). This \$24 billion — the value of which may change — would be the latest U.S. commitment to Ukraine, which includes more than \$100 billion in expenditures to date. The administration sent a letter to then-Speaker of the House Kevin McCarthy on August 10, 2023, that stated “...the President has reaffirmed that we will stand with Ukraine as it defends its sovereignty for as long as it takes, a strategy that has successfully united our allies and partners...” The letter goes on to state that the funding will support Ukraine, “...as well as countries and vulnerable populations worldwide impacted by Russia’s (invasion)...”

The President also describes this latest multi-billion-dollar request as what is necessary to support Ukraine operations for two months, representing a \$12 billion per month expenditure rate. Prior to this most recent request, over the past 19 months, the average expenditure rate was just \$6 billion per month. That means the latest request represents a roughly 2x increase in expenditure rates. This increase comes during what is best described as a stalemate between Ukrainian and Russian forces on the ground in the eastern region of Donbass and a new war in Israel. This latest request also comes

amid the continued, complete absence of a cogent, comprehensive, and tested strategy to win from either President Zelensky or President Biden. President Biden’s current position of “whatever it takes for as long as it takes” is not a reasonable strategy to win. It at best represents a strategy to remain mired in what looks more and more to be a prolonged stalemate with no exit strategy at all.



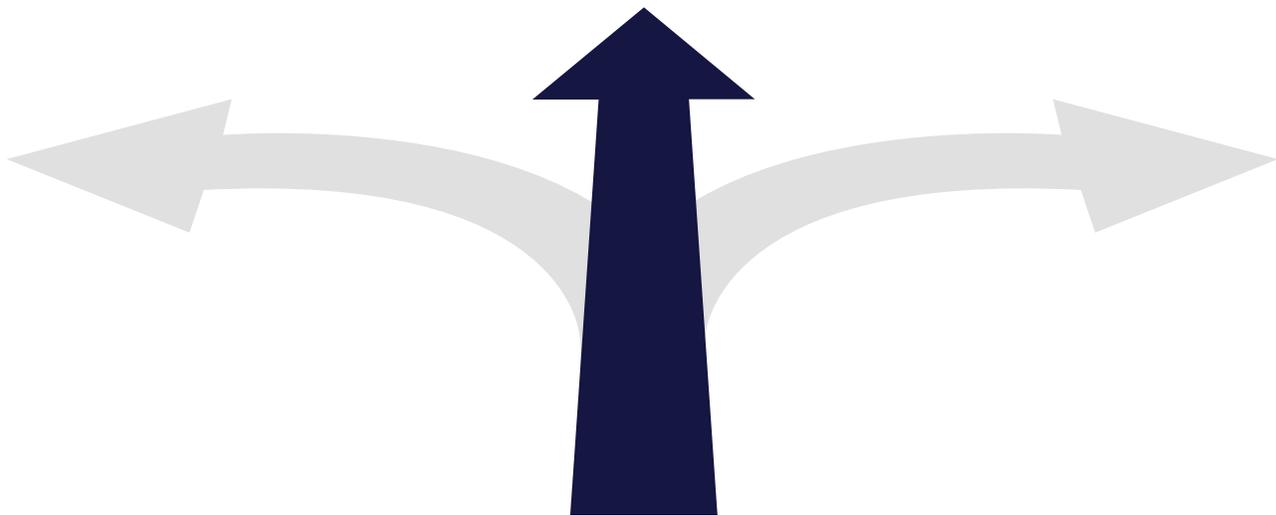


“ I believe the lack of transparency and accountability by the executive branch, combined with the absence of a coherent win strategy and path to peace, is the forcing function for this erosion.”

PART II: TWO POLICY ISLANDS DRIFTING APART WITHOUT FURTHER DEBATE

The juxtaposition of President Biden’s “blank check” policy and several Congressional members’ “never a dollar more” policy is stark. Any casual observer can see erosion of support for future Ukraine aid not only among members of Congress, but also among the American people. President Biden’s assertion that his “whatever it takes” strategy has “successfully united our allies and partners” has proven to ironically divide the American people and their representatives. **I believe the lack of transparency and accountability by the executive**

branch, combined with the absence of a coherent win strategy and path to peace, is the forcing function for this erosion. And as those who support a “whatever it takes” mentality dig in, so do those in the camp of “not a dollar more.” The two camps have established a polarizing discourse that seems to yield no sensible middle ground that best represents the will of the American people. Any war effort funded by American taxpayers should have the support and understanding of the taxpayers and their representatives in Congress.





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'Whatever it takes' seems to include negatively impacting our own capacity and readiness challenges. Amid an ongoing war in Israel and in the shadow of CCP aggression and what looks like an imminent threat in the South China Sea, these are dangerous tradeoffs.”

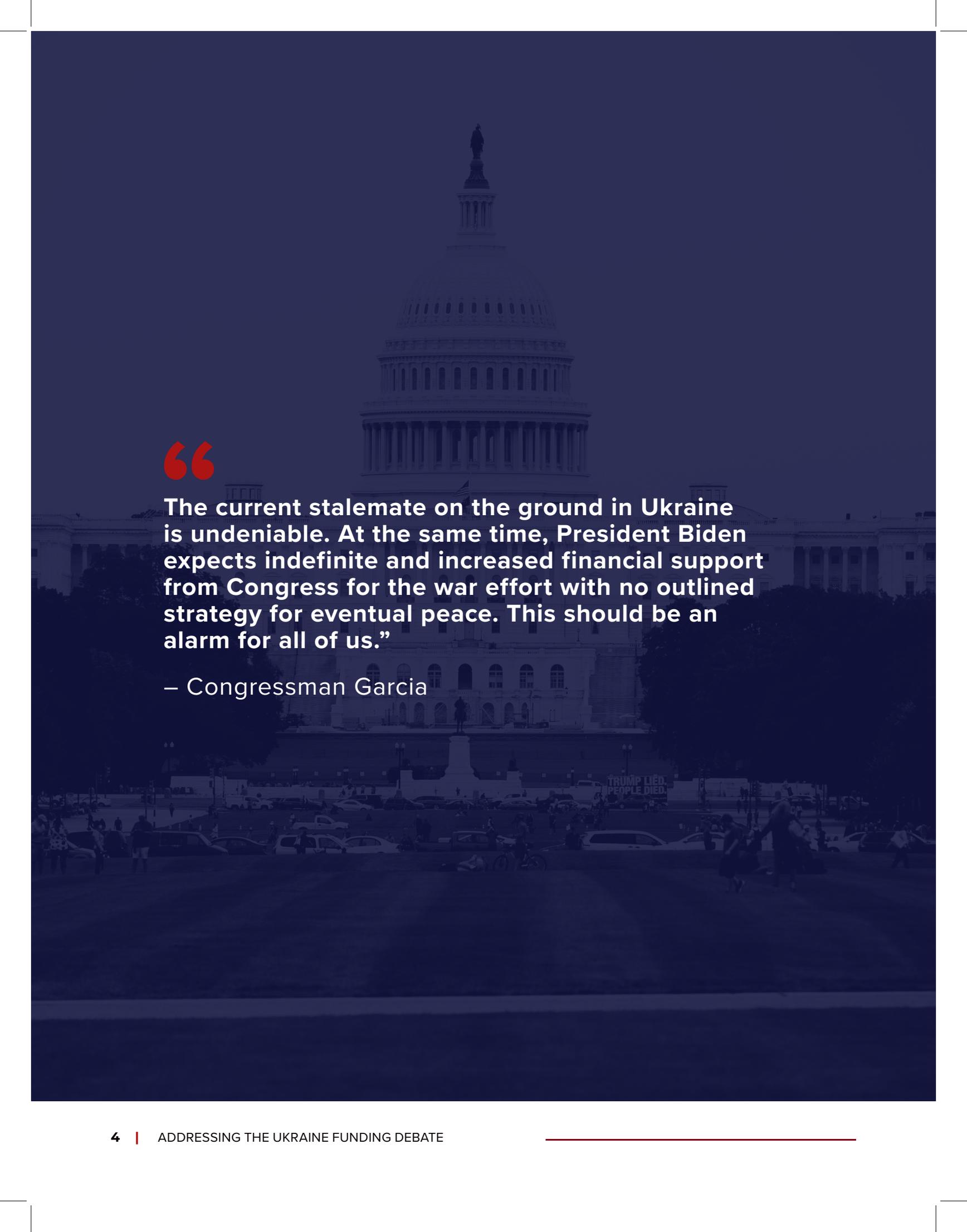
PART III: A NECESSARY PIVOT IN THE PARADIGM

After supporting the early investments in the Ukrainian war effort, I find myself unable to support future funding requests without assurances of adequate transparency, accountability, and an articulated path to victory with sustainable peace. The early investments were primarily comprised of surplus weapon systems in our military's inventory, such as Javelin and Stinger missiles, which were set to expire in the next 2-3 years and were ultimately expended on the Russian targets for which they were intended (the Stingers were designed for Russia's Hind helicopters and the Javelins were designed for the T72 and T52 Russian tanks). These early expenditures saw Ukrainian forces repel Russian troops to the Donetsk and Luhansk regions, and their rate of doing so from February 2022 through November 2022 was impressive. These strategic investments are why Ukraine still exists today, and why Zelensky and his government remain intact. They are also why China's Chairman Xi has slowed his planning efforts of annexing Taiwan in the same manner, and they're why nations like South Korea, Taiwan, and Japan have doubled or tripled their defense investments relative to their GDP's.

These are significant returns on investment that the U.S. has yielded as a result of our support of Ukraine to date. The efforts on the ground in Ukraine have stalled since last November following Russia's withdrawal from Kherson. Both sides now find themselves entrenched in a war with tactics that resemble World War I more than any modern-day fight. The troops are forced into trench warfare-style tactics under the umbrella of significant Integrated Air Defense Systems (IADS), such as the S-300 and S-400 systems, which prevent any meaningful, immediate air support. And while the previous returns on our investments are significant for both our nation and our allies, they have come with some negative effects as well.

The “pull-ahead contracting” requirements to better support Ukraine are adversely affecting domestic weapon systems production programs, Foreign Military Sales programs (which are used to support Taiwan), and Foreign Military Funds/Financing (which are used to support Israel). We have been cannibalizing our own inventory levels and our own industrial capacity to ensure deliveries are made to Ukraine without considering offsets to sufficiently replenish the coffers. **“Whatever it takes” seems to include negatively impacting our own capacity and readiness challenges. Amid an ongoing war in Israel and in the shadow of CCP aggression and what looks like an imminent threat in the South China Sea, these are dangerous tradeoffs. Russia is the slow and high snowball; China is the line drive to the forehead for which we must be constantly prepared.** In parallel, we must ensure Israel is secure and that our ally is adequately supported against the Iranian threat and their terrorist proxies, Hamas and Hezbollah.





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The current stalemate on the ground in Ukraine is undeniable. At the same time, President Biden expects indefinite and increased financial support from Congress for the war effort with no outlined strategy for eventual peace. This should be an alarm for all of us.”

– Congressman Garcia



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Any responsible legislator must be asking smart and reasonable questions today before supporting more taxpayer aid to Ukraine. Any well-intentioned leader in the White House and the Office of the Secretary of Defense (OSD) should be ‘chomping at the bit’ to answer these questions.”

PART IV: A RESPONSIBLE CALL FOR PAUSE

The current stalemate on the ground in Ukraine is undeniable. At the same time, President Biden expects indefinite and increased financial support from Congress for the war effort with no outlined strategy or foreseeable path to negotiations. This should be an alarm for all of us. Any responsible legislator must be asking smart and reasonable questions today before supporting more taxpayer aid to Ukraine. Any well-intentioned leader in the White House and the Office of the Secretary of Defense (OSD) should be “chomping at the bit” to answer these questions. The American people have a clear and logical right and rationale to say “no more” until these questions are adequately answered, especially in the midst of a nightmarish border crisis in our own country. They deserve answers and have a right to be skeptical of our endless involvement in a foreign war without being called “Putin sympathizers” or being labeled as “pro-Russian.”

I would be remiss if I did not acknowledge that this type of information and delivery of critical elements to a successful military campaign is normally the role of the executive branch, not the legislative branch. I write this not because I wish to do the job of President Biden or Secretary of Defense Austin, but because I feel strongly that Ukraine will ultimately fall — either as a result of a growing U.S. tendency towards isolationism or a presumption of the endless, directionless blank-check strategy — if these questions are not answered by President Biden and his administration. As someone who has spent the plurality of his adult life training to fight Russians, I understand better than most the value of beating Russia in this conflict and the consequences of Ukraine losing this war. While we can’t change the people in the White House, we can compel

behavior changes by demanding convincing answers to reasonable and necessary questions before we commit any more funds to an effort that has already seen an investment of more than \$100 billion U.S. tax dollars.

We also need to use this latest request as a vehicle to compel behavior changes from our EU and NATO allies. While many nations like Poland have gone above and beyond to help Ukraine monetarily, militarily and by housing millions of refugees, the fact remains that the bulk of NATO and EU members have not “pulled their load” in terms of direct support to Ukraine, direct support to NATO or investments into their own military defense budgets (as a percentage of GDP). The U.S. cannot be the primary bill payer for NATO and contingencies that directly impact the security of European NATO and EU partners. President Biden and Congress should be demanding more investment in the NATO mission and interests from our allies.



PART V: A LOOK AT THE NUMBERS TO DATE AND MOVING FORWARD

Here is an overview of U.S. expenditures in support of Ukraine to date:

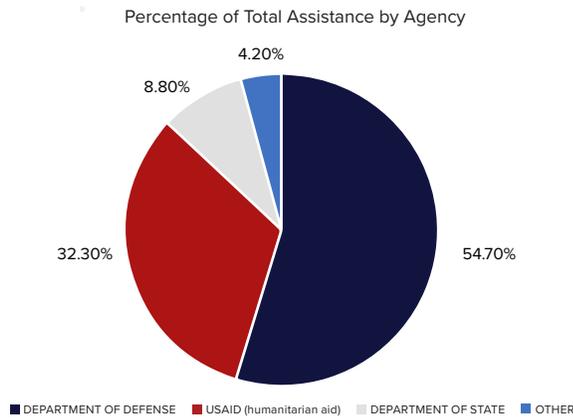


Figure 1.0 This graphic represents a breakout of total expenditures through 10/1/23 by agency

The above chart makes clear that nearly half of U.S. expenditures are dedicated to humanitarian assistance and the function of Ukraine’s government, and notably not to the delivery of weapon systems, ammunition, and other immediate military needs. While there is no way to know, this figure begs the question of what the battlefield would look like today if we had left the humanitarian and government assistance to our allies and partners on the European continent and focused our efforts on providing Ukraine with overwhelming materiel and weapon support to decimate the Russian forces before they had a chance to dig in.

Below is a chart showing the average assistance provided per week for each of the previous aid packages.

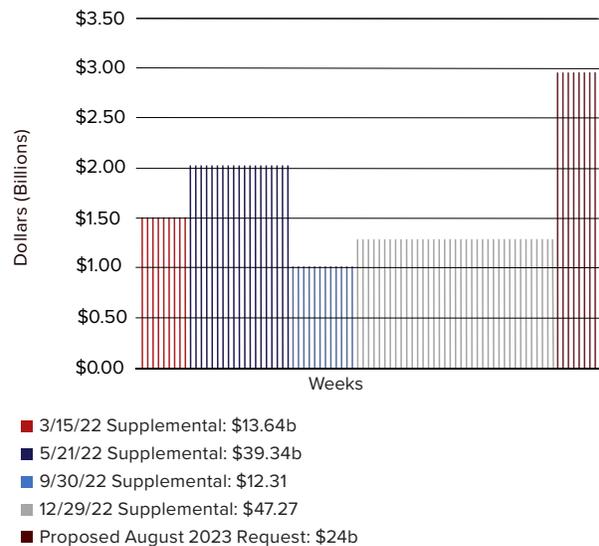


Figure 2.0 This graphic represents the weekly actual expenditures thru 10/1/23

As you can see, this latest request comes at a greater cost per week than the aid we provided at the start of the war when Ukraine was making substantial gains weekly. Contrast that with the slow, grinding warfare we are seeing on the ground today with no end in sight. For this reason alone, we should be hearing from the executive branch and the Department of Defense as to how our assistance will break the current parity and advance Ukrainian lines in a meaningful way.





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PART VI: BEYOND THE NUMBERS

The magnitude of the current request — which does not include an explanation for the dramatically increased burn rate — demands more thorough review and oversight from Congress. In parallel, we must demand more from our European allies. **The U.S. should decouple the humanitarian aid and remove any funding that subsidizes Ukrainian government officials and workers. If we are to effectively support this war effort moving forward, it is my belief that America should descope its involvement to that of enabling the killing of Russians on the front lines. That means providing the necessary weapon systems and tactics to win — not to tie.**

This budget footprint would be much more affordable and would yield a victory much sooner. **If we continue to blend and dilute the military aid with humanitarian aid, we are not supporting a victory, we are enabling a dependency on American taxpayers and a tie on the battlefield.** We would

yield a costly and unaffordable stalemate that has no perceivable exit criteria nor clearly defined “win strategy.” Before I delineate the key questions that the White House and Secretary of Defense must address before we should be willing to support future investment into Ukraine, I think it’s important to highlight key strategic mistakes and blunders to date. These mistakes have all either helped start or perpetuate this war. I highlight these mistakes because we have two critical historical patterns that are not positive indicators of future success. The first historical pattern is that Russia has a long history of starting and fighting protracted wars with no regard for blood, treasure, or time. Russia has engaged in 20 conflicts since 1917 with an average duration of 7.7 years. Eight of these conflicts lasted longer than four years. And since 1980, Russia has engaged in six conflicts with an average duration of five years. This demonstrates a Russian willingness to play the long game.





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[Biden] and his team have demonstrated a proclivity to make the absolute worst decisions in these matters, most notably during the withdrawal from Afghanistan...”

PART VII: CRITICAL STRATEGIC ERRORS TO DATE

The second and more troubling historical pattern is a long list of national security and international diplomacy failures in the 2.5-year tenure of President Joe Biden’s administration. He and his team have demonstrated a proclivity to make the absolute worst decisions in these matters, most notably during the withdrawal from Afghanistan, which will go down as the most disastrous military operation in American history.

These two patterns do not bode well for an immediate and affordable resolution to the conflict in Ukraine. They are harbingers of a costly and potentially escalated conflict with Russia, riddled with future U.S. strategic errors. I predict future strategic errors aggravated by a trail of strategic errors already realized under this administration. Here are the Biden administration’s strategic errors to date:

- 1. July — September 2021:** President Biden’s devastating withdrawal from Afghanistan demonstrated to the world an unprecedented level of military and diplomatic weakness. This led to the killing of hundreds of Afghan civilians and 13 U.S. servicemembers, as well as the loss of a critical strategic foothold at Bagram Airfield (which sits on the back porch of China). It also demonstrated a U.S. willingness to abandon a partner and cede critical strategic resources almost overnight. This served as a green light to Putin as he begins to amass troops on Ukraine’s border with Russia.
- 2. January 19, 2022:** In response to Putin’s troop movements along the Ukraine border, President Biden stated that “...it depends on what [Russia] does. It’s one thing if it’s a minor incursion and then we end up having a fight about what to do and not do.” If there is a polar opposite statement to “peace through strength,” this is it. This level of “strategic ambiguity” set the stage for Putin’s invasion just four weeks later, which began under the auspices of a “minor incursion” before assaults on the capitol city of Kiev just a few days later.
- 3. December 2022 — Present:** U.S. and allies take a moderated approach to sanctions against Russia, exempting the top three revenue sources to the aggressor nation. While the economic damages were felt early on, the Russian economy was able to recover and heal as a result of these exemptions on oil, grain, and rare earth minerals. These exemptions were ultimately a revenue lifeline to fund Putin’s invasion.
- 4. January — February 2022:** The U.S. decided to honor the 1936 Montreux Convention, which limits and prohibits the sailing of war vessels into the critical and strategic Black Sea (critical waterfront for Ukraine, Crimea and Russia). The U.S. honored this agreement and removed all U.S. Navy ships from the Black Sea despite a compelling need for U.S. Naval presence as a form of deterrence and, perhaps even more notably, despite the fact that the U.S. didn’t even sign on to the Convention agreement in the first place. This move enabled Russian fleet forces to establish an early maritime dominance around Crimea and Odesa that persists for the first year of war.

5. **January — July 2022:** Military senior advisors, including the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff and the Secretary of Defense, make three critical assessment errors.
 - a. They believed Ukraine would fall within a few weeks. This clearly turned out to be very wrong.
 - b. They underestimated the Ukrainian war fighters' ability to learn, adopt, and employ new weapon systems. The repeated excuses, "It will take too long to train and equip them," and "by the time they get these weapons the war will be over," ended up being a default answer for the first 4-6 months of the war.
 - c. They adopted a policy of sending Ukraine just enough weapons to survive for fear of escalation. This was a reasonable fear at the onset of the conflict, but Putin's threats of escalation have long since proven to be empty. This strategic miscalculation has cost us far more in the long run and cost the Ukrainians immense and unnecessary damage. Fear-based behavior led to major handicaps in the first 6-9 months of the war.

The combination of these three errors led to an inability and lack of desire to front load the Ukraine war efforts. Such front loading would have enabled a "shock and awe" mentality and counter offensive as the momentum shifted and Russian forces were retreating east and south.

6. **February 2022 — Present:** The Biden administration prioritizes an unfounded sensitivity to escalating the conflict rather than enabling an overwhelming win for Ukraine. Several weapon systems that could have been "game changers" on the battlefield were not supplied to Ukraine due to a fear that providing such systems would escalate tensions with Russia. This inversion of priorities leads to a "slow drip" of sanctions and late deliveries of critical weapon systems that could have otherwise led to a negotiated settlement as a result of a maximum-pressure mindset against Putin. Early, aggressive pressure is always a stronger deterrence than late and underwhelming force.
7. **February 2022 — Present:** President Biden and Secretary Austin adopt a "blank check" and "whatever it takes" mentality that holds no one accountable, all but guaranteeing a stalemate. This "strategy" breeds and encourages valid opposition to additional funding without a defined path (or attempt) to victory and peace.
8. **January 2023 — Present:** President Biden and Secretary of State Blinken show zero interest in compelling Ukraine and Russia to come to the table to discuss peace settlement negotiations. All wars end at a negotiation table and there is currently no path to enable these discussions.





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Failure to ask these questions, and a continued willingness by Congress to enable this carte blanche mentality to date, is in my opinion a dereliction of duty and a recipe for disaster that will enable a Ukrainian defeat and enhance Chinese aggression.”

PART VIII: REASONABLE AND RATIONAL CONDITIONS NEEDED TO SUPPORT ADDITIONAL INVESTMENTS IN UKRAINE

In the wake of these critical strategic errors and because of these setbacks, we as members of Congress have an obligation to ensure this White House is more thorough and accountable to the American taxpayer. We have an obligation to seek the path to victory so we can focus on not only beating down Russia, but also refocus our national security apparatus on that “line drive to the forehead” represented by China’s CCP. Failure to ask these questions, and a continued willingness by Congress to enable this carte blanche mentality to date, is in my opinion a dereliction of duty and a recipe for disaster that will enable a Ukrainian defeat and enhance Chinese aggression.

These all fall into three strategic buckets: Strategy to Win; Transparency and Accountability; and a Path to Lasting Peace:

- 1.** President Biden and President Zelensky must provide the U.S. Congress with an actual win strategy. Simply stating “we are with you until we prevail” or “we must win” are not win strategies. How does Ukraine prevail and how long is this expected to take? These estimates do not need to be exact, but we should understand the end-state goal and exit criteria.
- 2.** What is the estimated price tag associated with the execution of the win strategy? Selective disclosure and incremental asks averaging \$12 billion per month is unaffordable, unsustainable, and unacceptable.
- 3.** President Biden and Secretary Austin need to clearly update the American people on the status of the war in Ukraine. This includes informing the public on Ukrainian progress to date, outlining causal factors for the current stalemate, and providing a status update on the “spring counteroffensive.”
- 4.** President Biden and Secretary Austin must explain why future U.S. investments are necessary. This includes outlining which weapons are being sent and how those specific weapons will help win the war, not just prolong it. Also, it is important to get an assessment of which weapons have not been sent but could have altered the trajectory of the war before today.
- 5.** President Biden and Secretary Austin must provide Congress with a list of weapons that have not been sent to Ukraine but would be effective in altering the current stalemate. The administration’s current slow-drip policy has only prolonged Ukraine’s suffering, and it is the responsibility of Congress to play a role in deciding what additional capabilities should be offered to Ukraine.

6. President Biden and Secretary Austin must explain what would happen if American investments into Ukraine cease. Do we believe EU and NATO nations would also divest from the efforts? Would Ukraine not be able survive and win? If not, why? What core military exports would be necessary?
7. U.S. Treasury and Commerce need to report to Congress with the level of enforcement and compliance of already approved sanctions against Russia. No one is providing regular and thorough updates to Congress on the existing sanctions.
8. The U.S. and all NATO members should adopt a full-sanction policy against Russia to include ALL oil, grain, and rare earth minerals. These three critical exports are currently not meaningfully impacted by global sanctions, and they represent the bulk of export revenue to Russia.
9. President Biden and Secretary Austin must provide a clear explanation of why the resources being requested are the right ones to win.
10. Do the U.S. and Ukraine have alignment on the mission objectives regarding Crimea? Does the U.S. believe the desire of Ukraine to reclaim Crimea is realistic? A classified venue is sufficient for this discussion.
11. President Biden and President Zelensky must continue to provide Congress with a full accounting — to the extent possible - of weapon systems that have been sent and used to date.
12. President Biden must provide a commitment and evidence to the fact that his administration is not jeopardizing the schedule and cost of critical domestic weapon programs or the commitments we have made to Taiwan FMS programs and Israel FMF programs. We cannot cannibalize the capacity for our own capabilities — or our other strategic partnership requirements — to meet commitments to Ukraine.





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