

Bloomberg Government

DEFENSE BRIEF: US Sends Ukraine Weapons Aid, Presses House GOP

By Katrice Eborn, Ellen Gilmer, and Roxana Tiron

March 13, 2024

The White House is sending a package of \$300 million in military assistance to Ukraine, the Biden administration's latest effort to secure aid for Kyiv as Congress remains deadlocked.

That deadlock is hard to budge despite House Democrats and some Republicans launching separate efforts to unlock foreign aid, following GOP leadership's refusal to bring a Senate-passed package to the floor for a vote.

The Pentagon hasn't received any additional funding for Ukraine in 15 months, a senior defense official said.

National Security Advisor Jake Sullivan said it was urgent for Congress to approve further assistance, adding that Ukrainian troops were being forced to "ration" their ammunition with the war against Russia now in its third year.

"We're already seeing the effects on the battlefield," Sullivan said yesterday at the White House, calling it assistance Ukraine "desperately needs" to hold the line against Russia. [Read more from Roxana Tiron and Tony Capaccio.](#)

Moderate Republican Rep. Brian Fitzpatrick (Pa.) is leading an endeavor to move forward on aid by using a rare procedural quirk known as a discharge petition.

But it faces steep obstacles as Democratic leadership objects to a lack of humanitarian aid in the bill. The dynamic creates an uncertain path forward for aid to Ukraine and Israel, Maeve Sheehy reports.



Brief Exclusive
Roxana Tiron - Defense Reporter

The House Armed Services Committee is planning to write the fiscal 2025 defense authorization bill in May, with the goal of bringing it to the House floor at the beginning of June, Rep. Mike Rogers (R-Ala.) told Bloomberg Government. The schedule is still fluid and could change, as House leaders are the ones deciding the floor schedule.

The Pentagon submitted a \$850 billion budget request for fiscal year 2025 on Monday.

"Our defense budget should be built with the goal of deterring the threats facing our nation," Rogers said in a statement on Monday. "Instead, we are forced to build a budget to meet an arbitrary number. I worry about the long-term impact this budget process will have on our national defense."

Also, the Pentagon is requesting \$28.2 billion for military intelligence programs in fiscal year 2025, according to a statement.

With the Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Act's April 19 expiration deadline quickly approaching, House lawmakers are still divided on how to overhaul Section 702 of the controversial surveillance law.

Section 702 allows US agencies to collect the electronic communications abroad of people who aren't US citizens. Members of Congress and civil liberties groups have criticized the tool as sweeping up the data of Americans, which can then be searched by the federal law enforcement.

Rep. Jim Jordan (R-Ohio), the chair of the Judiciary Committee, said he and other privacy advocates are still pushing for a warrant requirement that is staunchly opposed by the intelligence community and the leaders of the Intelligence Committee.

Each side has been pushing for an amendment process, but House leaders last month pulled legislation off the floor after it became clear that it would sink.

Privacy advocates led by Jordan and Rep. Jerry Nadler (D-N.Y.) were pushing, with some bipartisan success in the Rules Committee, to require warrants for surveillance opposed by the intel committee.

Meanwhile, House Intelligence Chair Mike Turner (R-Ohio) alerted the public about a threat posed by Russia, information that advocates indicated may have been obtained through Section 702.

The situation would have led to a standoff on the House floor, leading to the bill's failure. Jordan yesterday said his views haven't changed and that a warrant requirement is a must.



Brief Exclusive

Ellen M. Gilmer - Homeland Security Reporter

Federal Emergency Management Agency Administrator Deanne Criswell fended off criticism yesterday from GOP lawmakers who say her workers have spent too much time helping at the US-Mexico border.

FEMA manages a federal grant program that reimburses communities for the costs of caring for migrants who've recently entered the US and has sent personnel to assist at the border since 2014, Criswell said at a Transportation & Infrastructure subcommittee hearing, adding that both areas of work reflect FEMA's "recognized expertise."

The agency had about 250 members of its 24,000-person staff at the border in 2022; fewer than 50 FEMA workers are there now, Criswell said.

Rep. Scott Perry (R-Pa.) argued that the border work amounts to mission creep and said "FEMA can't be all things to all people."

Criswell also fielded questions about how FEMA decides which communities receive migrant-related grants, after many border towns complained about the money New York City and other northern communities received last year.

If Congress funds the program again, FEMA is committed to a competitive process based on “current data and current needs,” she said.

Happening on the Hill

House lawmakers will meet behind closed doors on March 20 to hear from federal officials from DHS, FBI, Drug Enforcement Administration, and Office of the Director of National Intelligence. The House Homeland Security Committee hearing, first reported by Bloomberg Government, will feature public opening statements followed by a closed session. [Read more.](#)

TikTok is focusing on the Senate as a House vote today appears increasingly likely to get the two-thirds approval necessary. CEO Shou Chew went to Capitol Hill yesterday to lobby against the bill that would force the app’s Chinese parent to sell it or face a ban in the US. [Read more.](#)

- **Bill Supporters:** House Energy and Commerce Chair Cathy McMorris Rodgers (R-Wash.) says she shares former president Donald Trump’s concerns around Meta and data security issues but TikTok legislation the House is considering is focused on national security. She said yesterday on Fox Business the bill is not related to content on Facebook or TikTok and instead targets foreign adversaries. [Read more.](#)
- [TikTok Plans Full Legal Fight If US Divestment Bill Becomes Law](#)

Terrorist threats toward the US have reached a “whole other level” from the already heightened situation before the Oct. 7 attack by Hamas on Israel and its response, FBI Director Christopher Wray told the House Intelligence Committee in an annual presentation on the biggest “worldwide threats” facing the US. [Read more.](#)

China leads in developing, testing and deploying hypersonics, besting Russia as the US works to catch up on the new weapons that travel five times the speed of sound, a senior US defense intelligence analyst told a House Armed Services subcommittee yesterday. [Read more.](#)

Industry & Contracting

The Pentagon formally approved Lockheed Martin’s F-35, the costliest weapons system ever, as ready for full-rate production, normally the most important milestone for a defense project. [Read more.](#)

The Pentagon pulled out of a plan to spend as much as \$2.5 billion on a chip grant to Intel, people familiar with the situation said, putting the onus on the Commerce Department to make

up for the shortfall. The move threatens to limit the total amount that Intel has been expecting to get in federal funding, setting up a contentious situation, said the people. [Read more.](#)

Foreign Affairs

The US sent an anti-terrorism team to “maintain strong security capabilities” at the U.S. Embassy in Port-au-Prince, Haiti, which remains open. [Read more.](#)

President Vladimir Putin said Russia would demand security guarantees to consider talks to end the war in Ukraine. [Read more.](#)

Biden thanked Polish leaders visiting the White House yesterday for their assistance to Ukraine. Poland has joined a Czech-led initiative to buy hundreds of thousands of artillery rounds for Ukraine with a “substantial” financial contribution. [Read more.](#)

- **Weapons Sales:** The US yesterday announced approval of a potential sale of missiles valued at as much as \$3.7 billion, with RTX and Lockheed Martin as the principal contractors. The US also [plans](#) to move forward with \$2 billion direct loan to Poland and will offer to sell 96 Apache helicopters to the country.