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US Senate votes to give Ukraine \$300 million in military aid

As part of the recently passed massive National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) approved in the Senate last week, United States military aid to Ukraine is projected to increase by \$50 million to \$300 million in 2020.

As the WSWS **noted** upon the bill's passage, the \$750 billion check for the Pentagon is the largest military budget in history and is part of the United States' preparations for a Third World War, involving China and Iran.

Of the \$300 million being sent to Ukraine, \$100 million will be used to supply Ukraine with lethal weapons such as anti-aircraft missiles and anti-ship weapons that can be used in a potential full-scale war between Russia and Ukraine.



US soldiers engaged in training exercises with Ukrainian national guard. Credit US Army

The bill's passage comes amid growing tensions between US imperialism and the European Union (EU), including over the Trump administration's war drive against Iran, which is perceived by Germany, France and other European states as a threat to their interests in the region.

The US, along with Ukraine and eastern European EU member states Poland, Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia, is also bitterly opposed to the Russian-German gas pipeline Nord Stream 2. US officials have repeatedly threatened sanctions against Germany over the pipeline.

In the months since his election in April, Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky has called for Europe to strengthen sanctions against Moscow over its issuing of passports to Ukrainian citizens within the separatist-controlled Donbass region in eastern Ukraine, all to no avail.

Last week, the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe voted to allow Russia to return to the 47-member human rights body with voting rights, sparking outrage from Kiev, which demanded that Russia continue to be excluded. The Ukrainian delegation walked out of the vote and Ukraine's Foreign Minister Pavlo Klimkin recalled the country's representative to the Council of Europe stating they had "lost our trust in everything else, and to restore it will be extremely difficult."

The measure passed by a 118-62 vote, with Ukraine receiving support in its opposition from the UK, Poland and the Baltic states. Alternatively, Russia's return to the group was backed by the EU's two largest countries, Germany and France.

Russia was first removed from voting in the Council of Europe in 2014 following the annexation of Crimea.

Prior to Russia's reentry, Zelensky claimed that he had unsuccessfully tried to convince French President Emmanuel Macron and German Chancellor Angela Merkel in separate meetings not to allow Russia to return to the Council.

Zelensky also called upon Russia to release 24 Ukrainian sailors who were captured by Russia in the Sea of Azov in a staged provocation by Zelensky's predecessor Petro Poroshenko. Poroshenko later used the incident to declare martial law in several regions of the country just prior to the first round of presidential elections.

Despite the portrayal of President Donald Trump by the Democrats as a subversive Russian agent, Trump became the first president to officially provide lethal military aid to Ukraine by sending the country anti-tank Javelin missiles, worth an estimated \$47 million, in March 2018.

Ukraine's defense minister, Stepan Poltorak, reported in April that the US had provided the country with \$400 million in military aid, much more than has been known. Summing up the lethal aid received from the US, Poltorak said: "These are Javelin anti-tank grenade launchers, modern communication systems, artillery recon tools, e-warfare equipment, anti-sniper systems, and unmanned aerial vehicles." According to Poltorak, all military aid was directly employed in the ongoing civil war by the Kiev regime against Russian-backed separatists in the East of the country, which has claimed at least 13,000 lives since 2014.

In addition, US National Guardsmen now run Ukraine's Yavoriv Combat Training Center and US Special Forces lead military courses for their Ukrainian counterparts.

Initially, Zelensky's election was viewed by some in Washington with trepidation due to his business ties to Russia and proclaimed willingness to negotiate with Russia. With his aggressive turn against Russia since the election, the US now appears to be fully behind the Zelensky regime weeks after his inauguration.

On June 1, Trump officially invited Zelensky to Washington in a visit planned to take place later this summer.

In a warmup for his eventual visit to the United States, Zelensky left Europe earlier this week for his first overseas trip as president to travel to Canada. The country is one of Kiev's staunchest imperialist backers in its more than five-year-long war against Russian-backed separatists in eastern Ukraine.

Like the US, Canada also has officially deployed members of its armed forces to Ukraine, where it claims to have "trained" more than 10,800 Ukrainian soldiers. In addition to personnel, the country has supplied Ukraine with \$785 million worth of military, legal, financial, development and political assistance since 2014, according to the *Canadian Press*.

While in Canada, Zelensky met with Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau at the third annual Ukraine Reform Conference in Toronto, which began Tuesday and concludes today. The Ukrainian president also met with Canadian Foreign Minister Chrystia Freeland, US Special Representative for Ukraine Negotiations Kurt Volker, European Commissioner Elżbieta Bieńkowska, and the leadership of the Ukrainian World Congress (UWC) and the Ukrainian Canadian Congress (UCC).

Meeting with bourgeois representatives of the Ukrainian community in Toronto, Zelensky, a native Russian speaker, invoked Ukrainian nationalism to drum up support among his hosts. stating, "The Constitution stipulates that the only official language in Ukraine is Ukrainian. As President and guarantor of the Constitution, I will defend the Ukrainian language, our sovereignty and our course towards Europe and NATO."

Canada is home to 1.3 million people of Ukrainian descent. Historically, a portion of this community has consisted of descendants of **Ukrainian fascists** from the OUN-B (Organization of Ukrainian Nationalists-Bandera) and the Ukrainian Insurgency Army (UPA). Having collaborated with the Nazis during World War II, they were channeled to the US and Canada in the immediate post-war period by the predecessor organization of the CIA, and they and their descendants have often gone on to play a significant role in the political and academic life of these countries.

Canada's foreign minister, Chrystia Freeland, who has been one of the most vociferous cheerleaders for Canadian aid flowing to Ukraine, is a representative of this layer: In 2017, it was revealed that Freeland's Ukrainian grandfather—Michael Chomiak—worked as a Nazi propagandist before fleeing to Canada in 1948 after World War II.

In addition to meeting with Zelensky, Freeland hosted the conference. Also in attendance were representatives from 30 other countries as well as the World Bank and IMF.