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## US “likely” to send long-range missiles to Ukraine

The United States will “likely” announce that it is sending long-range missiles with a range of over 100 miles to Ukraine this week, US officials told *Politico*.

The weapons system, known as the ground-launched Small Diameter Bomb, is a rocket-launched maneuverable glide bomb with double the range of the HIMARS missiles Washington has already provided.

Seeming to confirm *Politico*’s report, Ben Hodges, former commanding general of US Army Europe, wrote on Twitter: “GLSDB (ground launched small diameter bombs) will reduce sanctuary for Russians. Life is about to start getting very uncomfortable for Russian navy, air force and ammunition handlers on Crimea, along the ‘land bridge’... and hopefully soon for repair crews on Kerch Bridge.”

Hodges’ statement implies that the missiles would be used to attack the Crimean Peninsula.

The announcement would mark a repudiation of Biden’s pledge in May that “We are not encouraging or enabling Ukraine to strike beyond its borders,” and his declaration that “We’re not going to send to Ukraine rocket systems that strike into Russia.”

The US is expected to announce the weapons system alongside an additional 100 Stryker and 50 Bradley infantry fighting vehicles in a \$2.6 billion weapons package, *Politico* and the Associated Press reported.

The announcement is expected to be made Friday at the meeting of the imperialist powers funding, arming and directing the Ukrainian military, which will be held at America’s Ramstein Air Force Base in Germany.

While details are still being worked out, Poland, the US and Germany are expected to announce at the meeting the deployment of some combination of Challenger 2 and Leopard 2 main battle tanks, as well as hundreds of additional armored personnel carriers.

“We believe the provision of modern tanks will significantly help and improve the Ukrainians’ ability to fight where they are fighting now and fight more effectively going forward,” National Security Council spokesperson John Kirby said Wednesday.

“What’s really important at this point is providing Ukraine with armor capabilities, and, in particular, maneuver armor capabilities,” said an unnamed defense official, according to a Department of Defense news report.

The official continued, “We’re looking at modern, mechanized armored capabilities. And that’s why the focus on tanks, and Germany is the key to that capability.”

The Pentagon claimed that the United States and its allies have already sent approximately 900 armored vehicles to Ukraine.

The expected announcement of the new long-range weapons comes as press reports indicate that the Biden administration is discussing openly endorsing a Ukrainian assault on the predominantly Russian-speaking peninsula of Crimea, which Russia has claimed as its territory since 2014.

In an article headlined, “US Warm to Helping Ukraine Target Crimea,” the *New York Times* reports, “(T)he Biden administration is finally starting to concede that Kyiv may need the power to strike the Russian sanctuary, even if such a move increases the risk of escalation.”

The *Times* writes that “the Biden administration is considering what would be one of its boldest moves yet, helping Ukraine to attack the peninsula.”

The report adds, “American officials are discussing with their Ukrainian counterparts the use of American-supplied weapons, from HIMARS rocket systems to Bradley fighting vehicles, to possibly target Mr. Putin’s hard-fought control over a land bridge that functions as a critical supply route connecting Crimea to Russia via the Russian-occupied cities of Melitopol and Mariupol.”

It continues, “In deciding to give the Bradleys to Ukraine, the Biden administration moved closer to providing Kyiv with something for which senior Ukrainian officials have been imploring the United States for months: direct American help for Ukraine to go on the offense—including targeting Crimea.”

The article quotes Seth G. Jones, a senior vice president at the Center for Strategic and International Studies, as saying, “Ukraine could use Bradleys to move forces down major

roads, such as the M14, which connects Kherson, Melitopol and Mariupol... Any Ukrainian infantry advancing through these areas would face significant fire from Russian positions, and Bradleys offer helpful firepower and protection for troops.”

It adds, “The Bradleys, along with British tanks and the armored combat vehicles that France and Germany have agreed to send, could be the vanguard of an armored force that Ukraine could employ in a counteroffensive this winter or spring, government and independent analysts say.”

In order to hide the massively escalatory character of its planned war with Russia, the Biden administration had not explicitly endorsed Ukrainian plans to conquer Crimea, which is the official war aim of the Zelensky government.

Demanding an explicit US endorsement of attacks on Russia, Philip Breedlove, NATO’s supreme allied commander for Europe, told the *Times*, “We have in essence put limits on Ukraine, saying this war is going to be fought on your soil and not on Russian soil... To give Russia sanctuary from which to fight, without fear of reproach, is absolutely absurd. It makes no military sense.”



U.S. Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Gen. Mark Milley meets with U.S. Army leaders responsible for the collective training of Ukrainians at Grafenwoehr Training Area, Grafenwoehr, Germany, on Monday, Jan. 16, 2023. (Staff Sgt. Jordan Sivayavirojna/U.S. Army via AP) [AP Photo]

On Monday, Mark Milley, chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, visited the Grafenwöhr training area in Germany, which began training hundreds of Ukrainian troops on Sunday, including on how to operate NATO armored vehicles.

On Tuesday, Milley met in person with Gen. Valery Zaluzhny, the head of the Ukrainian armed forces, near the Polish border with Ukraine.

On Thursday, General Lloyd Austin will meet with the new German defense minister, Boris Pistorius, to discuss securing Germany's agreement to allow the export of the Leopard 2 main battle tank to Ukraine.

Explaining the US demand for sending the Leopard 2, *DOD News*, the official Pentagon news service, wrote, "The most immediately accessible and usable tank capability is the German Leopard 2. The Leopard 2 has digital fire control, laser rangefinders, a fully stabilized main gun and advanced night vision and sighting equipment. Its main gun is a 120 mm smoothbore, and it can fire on the move over rough terrain."

On Wednesday, Pistorius all but declared that Germany is at war with Russia, saying that "the Federal Republic of Germany is involved in a war, indirectly."

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