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European Languages

زبانهای اروپایی

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14.12.2023

Biden, Zelensky demand billions more for anti-Russia war



President Joe Biden shakes hands with Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky as they meet in the Oval Office of the White House on December 12, 2023 in Washington D.C. [AP Photo/Evan Vucci]

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky met Tuesday with US leader Joseph Biden, making a last-minute stop in Washington D.C. after celebrating the inauguration of Argentina's newly-elected fascistic president, Javier Milei, in Buenos Aires on Sunday. Zelensky's visit to Washington was part of the White House's ongoing effort to secure another \$60 billion for Kiev. The additional funding, which comes on top of \$110 billion already committed by the US since February 2022, is being held up in Congress by Republicans who insist that the bloodletting must be linked to the militarization of the American border and ferocious anti-immigrant policies.

The US-NATO war against Russia has turned into a stalemate and debacle over the last year. Despite receiving tens of billions of dollars of aid, Ukrainian forces have proven unable to dislodge the Russian army. Kiev's much vaunted spring-summer counteroffensive has resulted in basically no change in the battle lines and tens of thousands of dead soldiers. Oleksandra Ustinova, the head of a Ukrainian government commission that oversees military aid, told reporters this week that the Ukrainian army is dangerously low on ammunition, and its air defenses cannot keep up with Russian drone attacks.

At a press conference with Zelensky late Tuesday afternoon, Biden announced that he had approved another \$200 million of military aid for Kiev but could do nothing more. By blocking further supplemental war funding for Ukraine, Republicans are giving a gift to Moscow, declared Biden. In response to reporters' questions about Ukraine's strategy for the forthcoming year, neither the US president nor Zelensky could say anything concrete, apart from indications that there would be efforts to beef up Ukraine's air defenses and ability to dominate the skies. With Kiev having repeatedly launched drone attacks inside Russia's borders, this could indicate that the US is considering dealing with the military fiasco it faces through further escalation.

The press event, which was replete with references to "freedom and democracy," took on a particularly grotesque character when Biden declared that "the brutality, inhumanity, raping, burning and beheading" allegedly carried out by Hamas was "beyond comparison" to anything he had ever seen. He made these remarks as he defended Israel's action in Gaza, including the flooding of underground tunnels where Israeli hostages are being held. Biden has staked his presidency on victory in the war. He is widely despised by the American public and is becoming even more hated because of his unbridled support for Israel's genocide in Gaza. The disgust with his administration extends to the Democratic Party more broadly. The bogus call to defend "Ukrainian freedom" runs up against the sociopathic insistence on "no ceasefire."

Zelensky's government is also in crisis, riven by political conflicts and increasingly isolated from a population that is tired of dying and freezing with no end in sight. There have been protests across the country against indefinite service terms for draftees. Zelensky recently canceled forthcoming elections. Kiev, which is implementing right-wing economic measures at the behest of the IMF and EU, has made clear that it does not have the money to fund social programs, pensions, welfare payments and the like next

year. Meanwhile, aid for Ukrainian refugees is being cut, with Ireland the latest country to announce that benefits will be slashed.

Tuesday's meeting in the Oval Office followed discussions between Zelensky and Republican congressional leaders on Tuesday morning, during which time the Ukrainian president pleaded for more money and arms. He reportedly made no headway. Senator Lindsey Graham told the press afterwards, "Nothing's changed."

The Biden administration is determined that its hirelings in Kiev stay the course, regardless of how many Ukrainians come home in body bags. This number now runs into the hundreds of thousands. The White House sees the war, regardless of whether or not Ukraine "wins," as essential to depleting and destabilizing Russia.

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According to a December 11 article in the *New York Times*, "The Americans are pushing for a conservative strategy that focuses on holding the territory Ukraine has, digging in and building up supplies and forces over the course of the year." This "hold and build" strategy, to be paired with "deep strikes" into Russian territory demanded by the Ukrainian military, is intended to mire Moscow in an intractable conflict and create a Vietnam-like disaster for it. Whatever approach emerges over the course of the coming year, nobody in Washington cares in the slightest about the consequences for the people of Ukraine.

There are concerns within powerful sections of the ruling class in the US and NATO-allied states that the war effort against Russia is in danger. A November 30 article in *The Economist* warned, "For the first time since Vladimir Putin invaded Ukraine on February 24th 2022, he looks as if he could win," adding, "fatalism, complacency and a shocking lack of strategic vision are getting in the way, especially in Europe." It expressed anxiety that the Putin government, in addition to procuring overseas military supplies, "is helping turn the global south against America."

Similar sentiments were expressed on December 11 by the *Washington Post*, which decried "war fatigue" in the US and "palpable public exhaustion" in Ukraine. The editorial board insisted that there should be no let-up and called for "a military package sufficient to

see Ukraine through the hard year ahead, including much-needed ammunition, air defense munitions and more sophisticated weapons, such as air power.”

The Republicans in the US Congress that are holding up the latest aid package are not opponents of this in any sense. In its coverage of Zelensky’s meeting with US congressmen, the BBC noted that Republican Senator Graham, despite rejecting Kiev’s request for more arms, “has no doubt the Ukrainians will fight to the last man.”

Rather, the Republican Party is working to use American imperialism’s filthy overseas agenda to strengthen its reactionary domestic agenda. In addition, sections of the party speak on behalf of layers of the military and political elite that view the anti-Russian campaign as a dangerous detraction from the fight against the “real” enemy—China.

World Socialist 13.12.2023