

# US Military Assistance to Ukraine: A Historical Study

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**Abstract - In this research Paper Russia massing its troops along the Ukrainian border in January 2022 spurred the US and its NATO allies to further extend military assistance to Ukraine. Accordingly, the policy discussion in Washington began to increasingly focus on what the US could do to help Ukraine defend its territory and in the third week of January, the Biden Administration approved the delivery of US-made Stinger shoulder-launched anti-aircraft missiles to Ukraine, in addition to the upping provision of other military wherewithal.**

**Key Words: NATO, policy, defend, territory, administration, approved, witnessed, military assistance, instrumental**

## I. INTRODUCTION

While the month of January witnessed other US Allies, including the UK, also making plans to supply military assistance to Ukraine, there also ensued a debate on the pros and cons of assisting Ukraine militarily. Some made the case that the supply of US military assistance to Ukraine could prove instrumental in changing Russian calculus probably deterring Moscow from invading Ukraine while others claimed that the aid to the Ukrainian military could have a real impact on a possible fight with the Russians, making it meaningfully more challenging for Kremlin to achieve victory and ruling out certain military options Russia might be contemplating.<sup>1</sup>

There also prevailed another viewpoint that called for enhancing Ukraine's additional capabilities merely to augment costs for Moscow in terms of inflicting heavy casualties on the Russian side to generate politico-strategic problems for President Putin at his home turf, albeit without much expectation that Kyiv would prevail. Arguing that none of these arguments was convincing, Charap and Boston noted that it didn't mean that military assistance was not an effective lever for tackling the crisis.

From 2014, in the aftermath of the Russian annexation of Crimea and invasion of the Donbas, to the closing part of 2021, Washington had provided over \$ 2.5 billion in military aid to Ukraine which included the provision of trainers, selective defensive systems like counter-mortar radars, Javelin anti-tank missiles, etc. Pointing out that the military balance between

Moscow and Kyiv was so lopsided in Russian favour, Charap and Boston opined that any assistance provided by Washington in ensuing weeks would be largely irrelevant to the outcome of a conflict should it begin, especially in view of Russia's advantages in capacity, capability and geography combine to pose intractable challenges for Ukrainian forces tasked with defending their territory.

## II. EXPEDITING MILITARY AID

In the aftermath of the Russian invasion of Ukraine on 24 February 2022<sup>2</sup> the US embarked on an expeditious mission of providing military wherewithal to Ukraine, and on 16 March 2022, Biden Administration announced an additional \$.800 million in security assistance to Ukraine in the form of direct transfer of equipment to the Ukrainian military to help them defend their country against Russian invasion.<sup>3</sup> The security assistance package comprised Stinger anti-aircraft systems, anti-tank systems, tactical unarmed aerial systems, grenade launchers, rifles, machine guns, over 20 million rounds of arms munition, etc.

Another military aid package announced by Whitehouse on 21 April 2022 contained many similarities to the aid package of 16 March, and it expanded American support by including US weapons, training Ukrainians in the use of new systems along with two new items - an increase in the overall rate of support and a mysterious custom-designed aerial vehicle.<sup>4</sup>

By September 2022, the United States has emerged as a leading provider of security assistance to Ukraine, and from 2014 through 24 August 2022, Washington has provided more than \$ 15.5 billion in security assistance to help Ukraine safeguard its territorial integrity, secure its borders, and improve interoperability with NATO.<sup>5</sup> In 2022, the Biden Administration has made available more advanced defence equipment to Ukraine as well as greater amounts of previously provided equipment. The US security assistance committed to Ukraine as of 24 August 2022, inter alia, included the following: 8 National Advanced Surface-to-Air Missile Systems; 16 High Mobility Artillery Rocket Systems

(HIMARS) and ammunition; 1,400+ Stinger anti-aircraft systems, 8,500+ Javelin anti-armour systems and 27,000+ other anti-armour systems; 700+ Phoenix Ghost Tactical UAS, 700+ Switchblade Tactical UAS, and other UAS; 126 155 mm and 16 105 mm Howitzers with more than 900,000 artillery rounds; 20 120 mm mortar systems and 85,000 mortar rounds, 1,500 Tube-Launched, Optically-Tracked, Wire-Guided (TOW) missiles, high-speed anti-radiation missiles, and laser-guided rocket systems; 20 Mi-17 helicopters; hundreds of Armoured Humvee Vehicles and 40 mine resistant vehicles; 200 M113 Armoured Personnel Carriers; 10,000+ grenade launchers and small arms; and communications and intelligence equipment.<sup>6</sup>

### III. THE FALLOUT OF US ASSISTANCE

Ukraine has emerged as the largest recipient of US security assistance within a short span of seven months outstripping the US annual aid provided by the US to Israel or Egypt combined. Undoubtedly, Ukraine's right to self-defence, adopting a stance against an illegal war, and exacting a toll on Russia that could deter it from future hegemonic misadventures are seemingly sensible imperatives justifying US security assistance to Ukraine, nevertheless, the US and Western security assistance to Ukraine and the high morale of the Ukrainian forces have been instrumental in serving severe blows to the invading Russian forces and enabled the Ukrainian forces to recapture some of the occupied territories along with gaining an upper hand over the invading forces.

Admittedly, pondering over prudently and purposely about the risks entailing the supply of weapons to Ukraine ought to be an act of sound strategy and responsible foreign policy. While arguing that waiting until the conflict comes to an end to start this course of action could be too late, state that inundating Ukraine with arms and equipment does not come risk-free, and while the ends may justify the means, there are a variety of national security and strategic consequences that are required to be taken into consideration by Washington in order to put safeguards in place to thwart measures permeating reoccurrence of such a scenario.

Unchecked arms buildup of sophisticated American weaponry in Ukraine entailing more advanced systems with their long ranges and at least technical ability to reach into Russian territory probably implies the likelihood of provoking Russia of blaming the US and West, at least rhetorically, of proxy participation in the conflict, and the Russian propaganda machinery seems to be already engaged in this task. Western supply lines to Kyiv, especially the Ukrainian rail network, has already been targeted by Moscow, though with limited success.

The geographic proximity of Ukraine's neighbouring countries, some of which are also members of NATO, are vulnerable to Russian attack or risk the spilling over of the ongoing conflict inside those countries thereby portending an ominous threat to the sovereignty and territorial integrity of those countries along with enlargement of the conflict. Undeniably, the Biden Administration has insisted that possible risks have been carefully measured and Washington's support to Kyiv, while robust, does not tantamount to direct intervention by the US; nonetheless, Moscow is ill-prepared to subscribe to this version and has interpreted the prevalent situation differently.

But for the military-industrial proponents, war has never been a profitable enterprise either for the victor or the vanquished. However, the Ukraine conflict has highlighted the strategic significance of the superiority of the American weapons and the high morale of the Ukrainian forces has proved instrumental in serving severe blows to the Russian defences in terms of loss of lives and loss of weaponry, though Kyiv has also suffered immeasurable losses as well.

Russian operational losses from 24 February 2022 to the closing part of September 2022 include the following: Personnel over 57, 000; tanks 2290; armoured combat vehicles 4857; artillery systems 1369; multiple rocket launchers 330; anti-aircraft warfare systems 172; vehicle and fuel tanks 3711; aircraft 260; helicopters 224; UAV operational and tactical level 970; intercepted cruise missiles 241; and boats/ships 15.7

### IV. CONCLUSION

War has never been a profitable enterprise either for the victor or the vanquished and only the military-industrial complex profits from it by selling their weaponry. The ongoing Russian-Ukraine war has proved to be a testing laboratory of Russian and American weapons since the commencement of the exchange of armed hostilities. American weapon systems like HIMARS and other weapon systems supplied by the US to Ukraine have proved instrumental in serving severe blows to the Russian army in operational mode thereby proving the technological superiority of American weapon systems over the Russian weapons, and this entails the potential for the expansion of the market for American weapons.

Nevertheless, the pernicious consequences of this conflict have culminated in engendering spike in prices of energy and food grains along with disruptions in supply chains. Besides, both Russia and

Ukraine have suffered heavy losses in terms of military and civilian personnel and damage to property. An early solution to this conflict is in the larger interest of humankind and global peace and security.

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