

After meeting with troops in eastern Ukraine, Zelenskyy flies to Washington, meets with Biden, addresses Congress, receives Patriot air defense system.



Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy speaking to the U.S. Congress. Behind him, the Ukrainian flag signed by troops in Bakhmut for the Congress.

Only a day after meeting with Ukrainian troops in Bakhmut, a small city that is a focal point in the battle between Russian and Ukrainian forces in eastern Ukraine, President Volodymyr Zelenskyy, making his first trip outside the country since the war began nearly ten months ago, arrived yesterday in a U.S. Air Force plane at Joint Base Andrews outside Washington. After meeting with President Biden, he addressed the Congress, conveying to both Ukraine's immense gratitude for the financial, humanitarian, and military assistance it has received from the U.S. and its urgent need for continued support in the face of Russian President Vladimir Putin's war against Ukraine.

Prior to Zelenskyy's meeting with Biden, Secretary of State Antony Blinken announced that, pursuant to a delegation of authority from the President, he was authorizing the 28th drawdown of U.S. arms and equipment for Ukraine since August 2021. The \$1 billion drawdown will provide Ukraine with expanded defense and precision-strike capabilities, as well as additional munitions and critical equipment to enable Ukrainian troops to defend themselves on the battlefield. He noted that the Department of Defense was also announcing an additional \$850 million of security assistance for Ukraine, which will bring total U.S. military assistance to Ukraine during the Biden administration to \$21.9 billion. Blinken noted that the U.S. assistance for the first time includes the Patriot air defense system, which can shoot down cruise missiles, short-range ballistic missiles, and aircraft at a significantly higher ceiling than previously provided air defense systems. The Patriot system – Patriot stands for Phased Array Tracking Radar for Intercept on Target – consists of a battery that includes a truck-mounted launching

system that has eight launchers, each of which can launch, depending on the type of missile, 4 to 16 missiles, as well as a ground radar, a control station, and a generator.

In his remarks after meeting with Zelenskyy, Biden noted that this week the World Bank distributed \$2 billion from the U.S. in direct budget support for Ukraine, that USAID will provide more than \$374 million in urgently-needed humanitarian assistance, and that the U.S. will provide another \$1.85 billion in security assistance that will include both direct transfers of equipment and contracts for ammunition for artillery, tanks, and rocket launchers, and will also provide, as Blinken announced earlier, a Patriot missile battery for which the U.S. will train a Ukrainian crew. After thanking the members of Congress for their broad bipartisan support for Ukraine, Biden said he looked forward to signing the omnibus spending bill now making its way through Congress that includes \$45 billion in new spending for Ukraine.

After his two-hour meeting with Biden, Zelenskyy addressed the Congress, where he was greeted with a lengthy standing ovation by lawmakers and interrupted repeatedly by more standing ovations during his 25-minute speech. His reception by the Congress was a remarkable expression of the solidarity of the U.S. with Ukraine as it fights for its independence against Putin's expansionist ambitions. He left on his return to Ukraine soon thereafter.

On his way back to Ukraine, Zelenskyy met briefly with Polish President Andrzej Duda at Rzeszow airport west of Lviv. According to a statement from Zelenskyy's office, "The heads of state summed up the year 2022, which brought extremely difficult historical challenges due to the full-scale war that Russia launched against Ukraine on February 24. Volodymyr Zelenskyy thanked Andrzej Duda for the strong support of Ukrainians from Poland and its citizens. The leaders discussed strategic plans for the future, the agenda of bilateral relations and cooperation at the international level in the coming year. The Presidents touched upon a wide range of topics with an emphasis on strengthening the defense capabilities of the Ukrainian state and humanitarian issues, which are extremely important, in particular, for Ukrainian temporary migrants who were forced to leave Ukraine to escape the war."

And in Ukraine the war continues.

David R. Cameron
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