

# THE U.S. CAN HELP UKRAINE AND DETER CHINA

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*Ukraine – HIMARS*



*Taiwan anti-ship cruise missile*

How

can the U.S. simultaneously arm Ukraine in its fight against Russia and deter a Chinese invasion of Taiwan? It's a false choice.

A critical look at the weapons that Washington has transferred to Kyiv, what is needed in the Pacific, and when new production might become available reveals that the U.S. has enough resources both to arm Ukraine and to bolster deterrence in Asia. Ukraine and Taiwan don't need the same things.

There is a large category of U.S. capabilities that are critical in the Pacific and that haven't been provided to Ukraine. Taiwan is an island. To fight off a Chinese invasion it needs to develop its own undersea platforms and to field sea mines and fast-attack craft. For U.S. forces involved in a potential defense of Taiwan, the most critical capabilities would include bombers, attack submarines, hypersonic missiles and, especially, long-range antiship missiles.

By the same token, many capabilities provided for Ukraine's ground war, such as armored vehicles, counter-artillery radar, air-to-ground rockets and small arms, aren't at the top of the list of what Taiwan needs from the U.S., according to numerous unclassified expert analyses.

Aid to Taiwan and Ukraine isn't zero-sum.

Where there is an overlap of preferred military capabilities, some prioritization is in order. The TOW antitank missiles, M1 Abrams tanks, and high-speed antiradiation missiles that Washington has supplied to Kyiv would have some applicability in the Pacific, but they are less critical to Taiwan in the short term. Ukraine, however, needs them right now.

Similarly, weapons like the Harpoon antiship missile will be crucial to Taiwan's air-sea battle. Taiwan has so far received Harpoons only from U.S. allies. The U.S. should move delivery of Taiwan's pending Harpoon orders to the front of the line and, in the meantime, make transfers from its own stockpile of missiles slated for demilitarization or deep storage.

The U.S. has a variety of options to support both Ukraine and Taiwan. These include drawing down from U.S. stocks, ramping up production where possible, and making foreign military sales to Taiwan a priority. Take the portable Javelin and Stinger missile systems, which are important to both Taiwan and Ukraine.

The U.S. reportedly has a stockpile of 20,000 to 25,000 Javelins, and production is increasing from 2,100 missiles a year before the war to nearly 4,000 by 2026. Consistent with operational needs for U.S. forces, the Defense Department should transfer significant quantities of stockpiled Javelins to Taiwan.

For the Stinger, which the Army is currently replacing with a new mobile air defense system, reportedly one-third of U.S. stocks have gone to Ukraine. The Defense Department awarded a contract for production of 1,300 Stingers by 2026. At least several hundred stockpiled Stingers should be sent to Taiwan in the near term, given the importance of mobile air defense in the event of an invasion.

The U.S. defense industrial base is already kicking into a higher gear. The High Mobility Artillery Rocket System, or Himars, is a Ukraine mobilization success story. In each quarter of this year, American industry will produce almost as many Himars launchers as the total number provided to Ukraine from U.S. prewar stockpiles.

Production of Guided Multiple Launch Rocket System rockets has also increased significantly. Like Himars, these weapons are under new multiyear Pentagon contracts. Taiwan's pending Himars order will be fulfilled by 2026, but that isn't soon enough. The timeline should be accelerated, even if the Pentagon has to pay other customers to wait.

The Patriot air-defense system is also critical to both Ukraine and Taiwan. Taiwan operates several Patriot batteries as part of its integrated air-defense system, and a U.S.-provided battery in Ukraine has downed Russian missiles targeting civilian infrastructure. Because of growing demand, industry is increasing production capacity to 12 Patriot systems a year.

Taiwan is in the process of upgrading its Patriot batteries and interceptors, and while there are other countries waiting to take delivery of Patriot orders, the U.S. should make sure that Taiwan is at the front of the line.

The long-delayed decision to provide Ukraine with cluster munitions is a sign of progress, not desperation.

The Pentagon is working with industry to significantly increase production of 155mm artillery rounds, from 3,250 shells a month before the war to 40,000 by the end of 2025. While production ramps up, cluster munitions provide a bridge capability for the Ukrainians to sustain offensive bombardments against Russian ground forces.

This Ukraine-driven surge in artillery production will pay dividends for deterrence in the Pacific by bolstering U.S. stocks that can eventually be transferred to Taiwan. Not only are artillery shells a less applicable munition for what will primarily be an air-sea battle in the Pacific, but Taiwan also has the ability to manufacture them on its own soil.

The twin imperatives of backing Ukraine and bolstering deterrence in Asia are achievable for now. But Ukraine urgently needs more weapons, and the U.S. must act quickly to strengthen deterrence in Asia, even if a Chinese invasion of Taiwan might not come until 2027.

A narrow trade-off argument focused on Javelins and Stingers obscures the real problem—the limitations of the U.S. defense industrial base. Stated plainly, even if the U.S. stopped providing assistance to Ukraine today, the

most glaring obstacles to deterrence in the Pacific—from surface ships and submarines to precision-guided munitions—would remain.

*The good news is that the war in Ukraine has catalyzed action to revitalize America's industrial base, which will ultimately put the U.S. in a better position to deter a Chinese invasion of Taiwan.*

The Pentagon is investing billions in industrial capacity. To remain the arsenal of democracy, the U.S. must allocate additional resources, authorize long-term weapons purchases, and reform glacial bureaucracies. Only then can the U.S. sustain its longer-term national security objectives in Asia and Europe.

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