

# UKRAINE AID'S BEST-KEPT SECRET

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Here is the best-kept secret about U.S.

military aid to Ukraine: Most of the money is being spent here in the United States.

That's right: Funds that lawmakers approve to arm Ukraine are not going directly to Ukraine but are being used stateside to build new weapons or to replace weapons sent to Kyiv from U.S. stockpiles.

Of the \$68 billion in military and related assistance Congress has approved since Russia invaded Ukraine, almost 90 percent is going to Americans, one analysis found.

But you wouldn't know that from the actions of some U.S. lawmakers. When Ohio Sen. J.D. Vance (R) joined a United Auto Workers picket line in October at the Jeep assembly plant in Toledo, he said he wanted to "show some support for the UAW workers" in his state.

Yet he has not shown the same solidarity with the UAW workers in Lima, Ohio, who are churning out Abrams tanks and Stryker combat vehicles for Ukraine thanks to the military aid that Congress has approved. Vance opposes Ukraine aid, as does Rep. Jim Jordan (R), whose House district includes Lima.

Ohio voters might have expected their elected leaders to be pushing the (reluctant) Biden administration to give Ukraine more Lima-produced tanks and vehicles — or to require that more of them be included in the aid package for Ukraine that Congress will soon take up.

Instead, Vance and Jordan are fighting to stop Ukraine from receiving any more union-made tanks and combat vehicles from America's only tank factory.

It's not just them. In all, 31 senators and House members whose states or districts benefit from funding for Ukraine have voted to oppose or restrict that aid. They include some of the most prominent anti-Ukraine voices in Congress, such as Republican Sens. Josh Hawley (Mo.), Tommy Tuberville (Ala.) and Mike Braun (Ind.), as well as Republican Reps. Matt Gaetz (Fla.), Bill Posey (Fla.), Anna Paulina Luna (Fla.) and Lance Gooden

(Tex.).

At a time when both major parties are competing to win working-class votes and strengthen the U.S. manufacturing base, our military aid to Ukraine does exactly that — it is providing a major cash infusion into factories across the country that directly benefits American workers.

It is also creating jobs and opportunities for local suppliers, shops, restaurants and other businesses that support the factories rolling out weapons.

Until now, no one had mapped out precisely where these U.S. military aid funds are going. My American Enterprise Institute colleagues Clara Keuss, Noah Burke and I have catalogued the weapons systems being produced in the United States for Ukraine — tracing the states and congressional districts where they are being made and how senators and House members voted on the funding.

We analyzed contracts and press releases and spoke to defense industry experts, diplomats and Pentagon officials to determine where U.S. tax dollars end up.

We have identified 117 production lines in at least 31 states and 71 cities where American workers are producing major weapons systems for Ukraine. For example, aid that Congress has already approved is going to, among many other places:

- Simi Valley, Calif.; Fullerton, Calif.; Andover, Mass.; Forest, Miss.; and York, Pa., to build Switchblade unmanned aerial systems, radar systems and tactical vehicles.
- York, Pa., and Anniston, Ala., to build Bradley infantry fighting vehicles.
- Aiken, S.C.; Elgin, Okla.; Sterling Heights, Mich.; Endicott, N.Y.; York, Pa.; and Minneapolis to build howitzers.
- Peoria, Ill.; Clearwater, Palm Bay and Niceville, Fla.; Camden, Ark.; Lancaster and Grand Prairie, Tex.; Rocket Center, W.Va.; and Trenton, N.J., to build HIMARS launchers.
- Anniston and Huntsville, Ala., and Camden, Ark., to build parts for the Hydra-70 rocket.
- Farmington, N.M.; Orlando; Tucson; and Troy, Ala., to build Javelin antitank missiles.

Many other weapons systems are being built for Ukraine in factories around our country. Nor does this list count the suppliers that provide these contractors with parts, such as plastic and computer chips, or produce smaller items for Ukraine, such as cold-weather and night-vision gear, medical supplies, spare parts and millions of rounds of small-arms ammunition.

As one Ukrainian official told me, “Every single state in the U.S. contributes to this effort.”

In other words, as happens with foreign military aid, our aid to Ukraine is not only creating American jobs but also reinvigorating our dangerously atrophied defense industrial base. Vance said in October that “the condition of the American defense industrial base is a national scandal. Repairing it is among our most urgent priorities.”

Well, our aid to Ukraine is doing exactly that.

For example, the United States had not built a single new Stinger antiaircraft missile since 2005. The terrorists we were fighting in recent decades did not have jet fighters, so production faltered.

Now, thanks to the Ukraine aid that Vance opposes, the Pentagon signed a \$624.6 million contract last year to build Stinger missiles in Tucson, to replace about 1,400 sent to Ukraine. Without our Ukraine resupply effort, the Stinger production line likely would have remained dormant — perhaps until bombs started dropping in a conflict over Taiwan.

Or take the \$600 million being used to build two weapons systems for Ukraine in St. Charles, Mo. One is the Joint Direct Attack Munition-Extended Range (JDAM ER), an air-launched GPS-guided weapon that converts dumb bombs into precision-guided glide bombs with a range of up to 45 miles (triple the range of the original weapon).

The other is the Ground Launched Small Diameter Bomb (GLSDB), a weapon system newly developed for Ukraine that can be launched from High Mobility Artillery Rocket Systems (HIMARS) and can travel 93 miles, almost double the range of current ground-launched precision munition systems.

If we were not aiding Ukraine, the United States would not be producing either of these weapons. The funding Congress has provided to manufacture both systems injects many millions of dollars into Missouri's economy and is busying production lines for these advanced capabilities.

Those systems will now be available for the United States and Taiwan should a conflict erupt with China, as well as available for Israel.

Lawmakers who have voted to oppose or restrict U.S. military aid to Ukraine include, from left, Sen. Josh Hawley (R-Mo.), Sen. J.D. Vance (R-Ohio) and Rep. Lance Gooden (R-Tex.). (Jabin Botsford/The Washington Post; Ricky Carioti/The Washington Post)

Workers in West Plains, Mo., are using Ukraine aid to build the MIM-104 Phased Array Tracking Radar for the Patriot missile system that shocked the world this year by downing Russia's supposedly "invincible" hypersonic missile.

This saved Ukrainian lives and proved in real battlefield conditions that the upgraded Patriot system might help defend against hypersonic threats from other adversaries.

Most senators would take credit for these successes. Not Hawley, who is trying to cut funding for these systems being built in his state. The same goes for Rep. Jason T. Smith, who represents Missouri's 8th Congressional District, where the Patriot radars are built, yet has voted against such aid multiple times.

Missouri's other Republican U.S. senator, Eric Schmitt, has not yet voted on Ukraine aid but has said, "I don't support these forever wars." Perhaps he will support defense investments that benefit Missouri workers and strengthen our military production capacity to defend against Communist China?

Among the most shocking examples of our defense industrial base's decline is our struggle to produce a relatively simple munition: 155mm artillery shells.

These shells would be in high demand in any conflict the United States fights. Ukraine is firing 6,000 to 8,000 such shells a day, and Israel is ordering them by the tens of thousands. But before Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine last year, the United States was producing fewer than 15,000 shells per month. So the Pentagon has allocated \$1.5 billion to boost production by 500 percent and is on pace to reach 100,000 per month.

With our withered defense production capacity, including a lack of machine tools, reaching that rate will take two years. Even then, the U.S. output in 2025 is likely to not match that of Russia in 2024. But were it not for our aid to Ukraine, those U.S. production increases would not be happening.

With money Congress approved to arm Kyiv, shells are being assembled in Scranton and Wilkes-Barre, Pa., and in a new factory in Camden, Ark., using components (including explosives, propellant, primers, fuses and shell bodies) produced in such U.S. cities and towns as Kingsport and Cordova, Tenn.; Bristol, Pa.; Middletown, Iowa; and Coachella, Calif.

A factory being built in Mesquite, Tex., is expected to produce about 20,000 shells a month and employ at least 125 workers after it comes online early next year. The president of the Mesquite Chamber of Commerce told the New York Times that lawmakers who oppose Ukraine aid are "voting against your constituents. ... You're literally saying no to the people you're representing."

Yet Gooden, who represents Mesquite, voted against the aid that is helping fund the new plant in his district.

Our aid to Ukraine is not only forcing the Pentagon to rapidly increase the United States' ability to produce weapons; it's also modernizing the U.S. military.

As retired Army Maj. Gen. John G. Ferrari, now a colleague at the American Enterprise Institute, recently pointed out, we are giving Ukraine weapons systems that are often decades old and then replacing our stockpiles with more advanced versions.

"Because of the existing budget pressures on the Army, it wouldn't be able to afford this needed modernization of equipment on its own," Ferrari wrote in an op-ed. "By transferring weapons and gear to Ukraine, the Army would receive more modern weapons in return."

The U.S.-led effort to arm Ukraine reinvigorates our defense production capacity in still other ways.

The United States is also creating incentives for NATO allies to donate their old U.S.-produced and Soviet-era weapons systems to Ukraine by authorizing the sale of newer, modern U.S.-made systems to replace them.

For example, Poland sent 250 older Soviet and German tanks to Ukraine and signed a \$4.75 billion deal in April 2022 to buy 250 M1A2 Abrams replacement tanks that will be produced at the Lima, Ohio, factory.

Poland subsequently made a \$1.4 billion deal for additional tanks. Poland also sent its Soviet-made Mi-24 attack helicopters to Ukraine and then signed a \$12 billion deal to purchase 96 Apache helicopters that will be built in Mesa, Ariz.

Efforts to arm and equip Ukraine have also dramatically boosted sales of U.S.-made F-35 fighter jets. This benefits workers at production facilities in Palmdale, Calif.; East Hartford, Conn.; Middletown, Iowa; and Fort Worth, as well as in other U.S. cities that produce parts for the jets.

Finland, which finalized a \$9.4 billion deal to purchase 64 F-35s, has said the new planes will allow it to donate its old F/A-18 Hornet fighters to Ukraine.

Norway, which has donated old F-16 fighters to Ukraine, is purchasing 52 F-35s and spending \$293 million to arm them with 580 StormBreaker Small Diameter Bombs made in Tucson. Denmark and the Netherlands are donating 61 F-16s to Ukraine and replacing them with additional F-35s.

In all, our analysis found that there are at least 13 production lines in 10 states and 11 U.S. cities producing new American-made weapons for NATO allies to replace the equipment they have sent to Ukraine.

As Mark Cancian of the Center for Strategic and International Studies has concluded, “Much of the money directly supporting Ukraine is spent not abroad, but here in the United States.” This makes it “a misnomer” to call the \$68 billion he calculates we have spent to arm Ukraine “aid.”

As I have pointed out, it is in the United States’ vital interests to arm Ukraine in its fight to defeat Russian aggression. Our support for Ukraine is decimating the Russian military threat to NATO, restoring deterrence with China, dissuading other nuclear powers from launching wars of aggression and improving American military preparedness for other adversaries. The “America First” case for helping Ukraine is clear.

But if those arguments are not persuasive, then this should be: Our military aid to Ukraine is revitalizing manufacturing communities across the United States, creating good jobs here at home and restoring the United States’ capacity to produce weapons for our national defense.

Helping Ukraine is the right thing to do for U.S. national security. It is also the right thing to do for American workers.

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