

FDD Media Briefing: Update on Russia-Ukraine War - status, next steps

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Bradley Bowman, RADM (Ret) Mark Montgomery, John Hardie, Joe Dougherty (moderator)

Joe Dougherty:

Greetings, we will be starting in about 30 seconds. Thanks for your patience.

Good afternoon everyone, many thanks for joining us for today's call. My name is Joe Dougherty, senior director of communications at the Foundation for Defense of Democracies, FDD, a nonpartisan research institute focused on national security and foreign policy.

We're grateful that you've taken the time to join us as we address the latest developments regarding Russia's Invasion of Ukraine, the latest developments on Capitol Hill regarding the Ukraine Aid package, and the military equipment that the West can provide Ukraine immediately and in the future, and a look at the battlefield assessment and where it stands today.

Joining us today are three FDD experts. We have Rear Admiral, retired, Mark Montgomery. He's an FDD senior fellow, served 32 years in the U.S. Navy, including as commander of Carrier Strike Group 5, embarked on the USS George Washington. Mark was deputy director for Plans Policy And Strategy, J-5, at U.S. European Command and was assigned to the National Security Council from 1998 to 2000, serving as director for transnational threats.

Mark served as policy director for the Senate Armed Services Committee under the leadership of Senator John S. McCain.

Also with us today is Bradley Bowman, senior director of FDD Center on Military and Political Power. Bradley spent nine years in the U.S. Senate, including as a former national security advisor to members of both the Senate Armed Services and Foreign Relations Committees. Bradley served more than 15 years on active duty as a U.S. Army officer, including time as a company commander, Black Hawk pilot, Congressional affairs officer on the Army staff in the Pentagon, and staff officer in Afghanistan. He's also a former assistant professor at West Point.

And we have John Hardie, deputy director of FDD's Russia Program, focusing on Russian foreign and security policy, U.S. policy toward Russia, and the post-Soviet space, and transatlantic relations. John's expertise includes objective in-depth battlefield assessments of the Russia-Ukraine war, as well as the importance of U.S. and allied military equipment to Ukraine's ability to fight off Russia's invasion.

First, some quick housekeeping; today's conversation is on the record, and we will share the transcript and recording from today's call within about 24 hours. So thank you for your patience there.

Today's run of show as follows, we'll first hear from Brad with a brief introduction, followed by Mark with some comments, then John, and then some in-depth analysis before we open it up for questions and answers.

If you do have a question, you can use the chat feature or you can use the raise hand feature in which case we'll let you know when you've been unmuted and you can ask your questions. Let's just get started right away. Over to you Brad, thank you.

Bradley Bowman:

Great, thank you Joe. Thanks to everyone for joining. I know you're busy, so we'll try to respect your time and hopefully make this useful for you.

Let me just start by providing a quick reminder of what happened last week in the House of Representatives. About six months after President Biden requested it and a few months after the Senate

passed a somewhat similar version, we saw the House of Representatives finally passed the Ukraine Security Supplemental Appropriations Act on a vote of 311 to 112.

As you know by now, it has some key major elements, about \$23 billion to replenish defense articles and defense services to Ukraine, more than \$11 billion for current U.S. military operations in the region, almost \$14 billion for the procurement of advanced weapons systems, defense articles, and services and so forth, as well as some other money, and also some policy riders, if you will, as well.

So significant legislation, important legislation. It's notable that more Republicans opposed the Ukraine legislation than supported it, 112 Republicans opposed the legislation, with only 101 in support. So that's noteworthy, and you may have seen that there were a few amendments that got votes.

One was by representative Marjorie Taylor Greene, Republican of Georgia, who's been a bit of a thorn in the side of the speaker, to say it politely. She filed an amendment that would've struck every dollar from the Ukraine package, and that failed by a vote of 71 to 351. And then you may have seen also we saw the amendment from Kat Cammack, Republican of Florida. She filed an amendment that would've cut \$10.5 billion in non-military assistance to Ukraine.

Interestingly, at least from my perspective, the vote on that amendment was 154 to 272, I think demonstrating that there's less support in the Republican caucus in the House for non-military assistance to Ukraine, so that distinction between security assistance and non-security assistance.

So, those are some of the things that jumped out about the legislation. It appears that the Senate will move quickly and then the President has made clear that he's ready to sign it without delay.

I think certainly my view and the view of my colleagues on the call, my great friends and colleagues, is that supporting Ukraine serves U.S. national security interests. It is a wise and affordable investment and not charity. And so I see developments last week as very positive.

Without zooming out too far, America served as the arsenal democracy in the last century, and we think it's in our interest to do so again, and that the delay frankly in providing Ukraine additional security assistance has been costly on the battlefield. We've seen the unnecessary loss of Ukrainian lives, I think it's fair to say. And we've seen some Russian gains on the battlefield, I think it's fair to say are a direct result of some of this delay in funding. So this is serious stuff. This is life and death, war and peace, and we see Washington beginning to move now and that's positive.

So as Joe said, John will provide a battlefield update. We'll talk a bit more about what the weapons that Ukraine needs, I'll have a few big picture thoughts at the end and we'll go from there, and eager to answer your questions. Before I do that, let me just turn it over to Admiral Montgomery for any quick comments he wants to make, Mark?

Mark Montgomery:

So thank you Brad. And then thanks to everybody for listening. A couple of quick thoughts. And my background was at EUCOM, when we had responsibility for both Ukraine and Israel, and then later at PACOM, where as the J3, I did the war planning for the Taiwan contingency.

First I'd step back and look collectively and say this was a good day for democracy. The funding of all of these, they each contribute to the other. In other words, the \$3.9 billion that Taiwan might be able to access seems like a small amount of money, but of course paying for deterrence left of bang is always cheaper. But the more important thing is the Ukraine money, this is about our credibility in a Taiwan scenario as well. So these things worked together really, it was a strong day for deterrence in Taiwan, almost as much as it was for Ukraine, and to a lesser degree Israel.

The other thing that caught my eye in this is the amount of money tucked into each of the three that really goes to improving our defense industrial bases' ability to produce munitions.

In other words, there's \$133 million in the PACOM one, there's a billion in the Israel one, there's billions in the Ukraine one that all contribute towards our ability... Raising the number of rounds we can produce for 155, and for GMLRS, which is the guided missile round that is fired off an MLRS ... not as far as ATACMS, but longer than 155, so two big artillery ones, as well as Javelin the anti-armor round, but also a lot of surface-to-air, the whole standard missile family, which is what's being fired in the Red Sea, Rolling Airframe Missiles, which are also fired in the Red Sea, and also the rocket motor parts that go into cruise missiles.

So there's a lot of investment there in our own ability to fight as well as to help all three of these beleaguered democracies fight. But the biggest chunk is in that Ukraine one, but it's in all of them.

And I'd also like point out that in the Ukraine provision there is a nice little nugget, in addition to the \$3 billion-plus in Foreign Military Financing for Ukraine, there's \$1.6 billion for Eastern European countries, and this acknowledges that Latvia, Estonia, and Lithuania particularly have jacked up their spending well above 2%, each of them closing in or exceeding 3%, recognizing the Russian threat right there. And so now we can help them with a little more FMF to them, and some of the other countries who've been helping with the logistics throughput get Ukraine, such as Poland and Romania.

So really a lot of nuggets spread throughout this that really make this a deterrence impacting, in a positive way, piece of legislation. So from my perspective, a really good day.

John, you want to talk about the battlefield in Ukraine right now?

John Hardie:

Sure. Thanks Mark and thanks folks for joining.

So as you may have been seeing, Russia's has been making slow but steady gains, albeit at significant costs. They've been focusing their main efforts in the area west of Avdivka and in the area around Chasiv Yar.

I'll take the first. For those who aren't familiar, Avdivka is the small city in Donetsk Oblast that Russia took in mid-February following a months-long and very costly battle.

Russia has since taken some of the low lying villages west of the city, but has really kind of heated up within the past week or so pushing on to advantageous high ground. It's kind of northwest of Avdivka, the settlement called Ocheretyne. So whereas the other towns are kind of low lying, this sits on tactically advantageous high ground, which I think could really deny important tactical advantage to Ukraine in that area for their artillery and FPV drone strikes, and also gain it for Russia.

The Russian gains there forced Ukraine's 47th Mechanized Brigade to kind of rush in and plug the gap. It was supposed to be rotating out, but it had to fill in there, amid some manpower shortages we'll talk about later. The ultimate [Russian] goal here is to kind of push west to this important logistical hub to the northwest called Pokrovsk.

As for Chasiv Yar, this battle has really heated up since early April. It's being led on the Russian side by elements of their Airborne Forces, or VDV. Russian has inched forward and secure a foothold on the outskirts of the eastern part of the city, the so-called "Kanal" microdistrict.

If you look at the city, the eastern part is split off by a shallow canal that creates an impediment for — a kind of an advantageous defensive barrier, impediment to crossing. But the eastern part of that city is sort of sequestered.

Russian Su-25 attack aircraft have been pretty active in the area, indicating a shortage of Ukrainian short-range air defense systems, even MANPADS. The Su-25s have really been penetrating much closer than you think they would if there was a significant MANPADS threat there. So I think that's perhaps an opportunity for the West to address in aid packages.

I should note that also the Russian glide bombing continues to be a major challenge in both these sectors and across the battlefield really. These bombs aren't all that accurate, but they do take a pretty significant toll, including psychologically, on Ukrainian units in the defense.

So Chasiv Yar is really important. It's a small city, but it's militarily important as a door to other nearby cities. And it sits on, again, high ground that can be very useful for Russian artillery fire, loitering munition strikes, things like that. So you could see if Russia is able to take this city, it'd be put it in a better position to try to achieve its ultimate goal of taking the rest of the Donbas region.

The common thread in both these sectors is a Ukrainian shortage of men and materiel, particularly artillery ammunition. Units are under strength, particularly on the infantry side, and are suffering higher casualties because of artillery crews have a decreased ability to stop assaults, so it falls more in the infantry. And also Ukrainian counter-battery artillery fire is not as potent, so Russia is able to mass artillery and really get after Ukrainian defenders prior to these storm assaults.

So the bottom line is this U.S. aid is really coming in the nick of time at a moment where Ukraine is starting to crack on the battlefield a little bit and I think really needs U.S. supplies, especially to backfill the artillery ammunition that a lot of units are rationing or even depleting their supplies of.

Joe Dougherty:

Thanks, John. That's a very nice segue into the equipment needs for Kiev. Over to you, Mark, to get that conversation started.

Mark Montgomery:

Well first, John hit it. I look at this in the short-term and the long, there's some short-term things that are absolutely critical to get. And I want to remind people PDA cutoff, Presidential Drawdown Authority months ago, which meant then there was a few light packages.

We pushed, John and I pushed that we probably could have done some more 155 from what's called DPICM cluster munitions, but they chose, because of dud rates, not to do that.

Bottom line is there's that short-term need that's artillery and some air defense ammunition, things like AMRAAM rounds, those go on the NASAMS launchers and PAC Patriot missiles that go on the Patriot launchers.

But what's interesting is we're still delivering Ukraine security assistance initiative funds purchased, things purchased at FY '22 and FY '23, are still delivering. So there's systems still delivering. So you look at, there's a very pressing short-term need, artillery and air defense artillery, which is, like I said, the two missile systems.

I think what's equally the opportunity in this package are what's available for the long-term, and that's ATACMS rounds that are required by section, I think 905, or I may have the wrong number there, but the section in the Ukraine supplemental that says you must deliver these unitary rounds, what should be the longer range ones that can theoretically hit like the Kerch Bridge or range, all of the C2, command and control, and logistic sites that the Russians are maintaining in Crimea so that if there ever were an offensive that began to cut off the land bridge to Crimea, you could then do back end damage and really trap the Russian forces in Crimea.

That's one. And then the second one to me is the F-16, and this is a little, I won't say it's controversial, but there's some who think, "Well, the F-16s are very old, or older Dutch and Danish models."

I talked to some F-16 retired general officers last week, and they were very explicit that these F-16s will be of value, and the American-trained pilots will be of value. In fact, I was out in Tucson where we train lots of country's pilots, including Taiwan's.

They're out there being trained by us on these aircraft equipped. So now getting this money will allow us to properly get the training moving and pushing so that we can have the 30 to 40 to 50 F-16s over time, and particularly get to that 30 by the end of this calendar year, get that distributed.

Why does this matter? So they become comfortable with these, they're using them, and then they're very available in 2025 for two big missions. One is so they can have temporal air power on occasion over an area and deliver munitions, but the second is they can do a little bit of that thinning of the herd on cruise missile attacks that we saw achieved in the Mideast by our F-15s and by Israeli planes.

There's opportunities for this. And so I don't want to downplay the value of getting these F-16s and what the money that's for UCOM operations and training can help provide to get everything ready. There's a big challenge with the F-16s, and that's getting the maintenance personnel and getting the contracts so that these can be maintained on the ground in Ukraine. I don't believe that's going to be done by active duty US military personnel, so that's going to be a contracting challenge for us. But my point on this is you have to look at both the short term, where everyone will fixate on C-17s taking off and landing in Germany and Poland with 155 and air defense rounds, but then also on the longer term preparing for 2025, with ATACMS rounds and F-16s, the kind of stuff you need really long term for that fight. Brad, any other thoughts on that?

Bradley Bowman:

Yeah, thanks Mark. Great analysis as always. I would just add a few quick things, then eager to hear anything John has to say. I agree, and this is well reported that the main urgent needs are artillery rounds, precision guided missiles, and air defense capacity. As John hit or implied in his update, we've seen more aggressive airstrikes along frontline forces, and we've also seen the Russians trying to pulverize Ukrainian energy infrastructure. So air defense is important not only to protect population centers and critical infrastructure, but also the frontline forces, and those are often different types of air defense systems. So I would just highlight that. Mark's great analysis on the PDA versus USAI. I would just emphasize that one of the reasons I'm most excited about this getting signed into law is because it'll allow us, again, to restart the presidential drawdown authority deliveries. And as we saw in 2022, many of these deliveries would be delivered within days of their announcement.

So there's reporting to suggest, and Mark would know, well, based on his time at EUCOM, that a lot of this is already pre-positioned in Europe, is already there, so it can start to flow into Ukraine within days and start to make an important impact because of PDA. On the USAI, the contracting, Mark's so right that those things have continued to deliver because those were previous investments. But you can also think of it as kind of a bit of a pipe, and it takes so long to go through the pipe, through the contracting and the building and delivering, and we had many months here where we weren't stuffing new contracts into that pipe, if you will. So that's going to create a little bit of delay that hopefully we can all work to make it short as possible.

On the ATACMS, for those of you on the line that don't follow this stuff down in the depths, I would just highlight the differences between the different types of ATACMS. Of course, ATACMS, Army Tactical Missile System, ground launched system operated by the US Army, several allies, highly survivable, all weather ground launch. Creates dilemmas for the Russians, that's great. Me, Ryan, and John Hardy, we

called for that to be transferred back in August of '22. And then finally the administration delivered a version, a less capable older version of the ATACMS on or about October, 2023. A lot of Republican members of Congress were upset by that and sent a letter. [They argued] The job on ATACMS is only half done. So we've been really emphasizing that those longer range ATACMS with more than 300 kilometers [range] with the unitary warhead, the very kind that the bill talks about are really, really important, I would say particularly for strikes into Crimea against hardened targets.

So that's one thing that I'm really going to be keeping my eye on to see whether the administration steps up on those unitary warhead ATACMS. And of course, Congress has now spoken on that issue and is not neutral, so let's see how quickly they comply. And the argument that we can't afford to send a few or a dozen or a couple dozen just I have not found persuasive for a whole variety of reasons, including our production rates and also because we're starting to deploy the precision strike missile, which is a more capable replacement over the ATACMS...So we can and should send those yesterday in my view.

Mark's point on the F-16s is great. He's really been leading analysis on that in Washington. I would just say if you look at the attack, the Iranian attack on Israel where they launched more than 300 drones and missiles and timed them in such way arrive within a certain time period, a large portion of those drones were shot down...the drones were shot down by fixed wing aircraft. So a lot of people said, "Oh, are F-16s going to be able to survive against attacks on frontline forces?" Well, there's different ways to use F-16s, as he suggests, and one is in an air defense capacity, a little bit back from the front lines, providing an additional means to intercept drones that are coming in. So those are a few quick thoughts that I hope were helpful. John Hardie, anything you want to add on specific weapons needs?

John Hardie:

Yeah, I would just add that in addition to all that Brad and Mark mentioned, which I agree with, some of the less sexy stuff Mark mentioned, the DPICM. I think that's something that could have been sent already as he mentioned. Also, another thing that the Biden administration probably could have sent already despite the lack of replacement funding for PDA are M113 armored personnel carriers. These are Vietnam-era, very old, humble vehicles, but they're very useful for Ukraine, especially for evacuating wounded soldiers. And if anybody caught the Kyiv Independent piece a couple of weeks ago on Ukraine's lack of protective mobility for exactly this function, especially M113s, which are kind of their workhorse for that mission, it is critical and it does lead to increased number of avoidable casualties at a time when Ukraine has to husband scarce manpower. So that's just one example of something that we could do and could have already been doing and should definitely now do that could have an important impact and maybe won't make as many headlines.

I think we should touch on perhaps Ukraine's... On the subject of Ukraine's manpower shortage, the mobilization bill. I think this is an important time for Kyiv to work with its Western partners now that we finally have our act together. Ukraine also has to show that political will to be aggressive, a little bit more aggressive in mobilizing troops, especially younger men, and address their side of the equation as well. Over.

Bradley Bowman:

I would just add real quickly on the Ukraine Defense Contact Group, this is the US-organized, US-led group that was pulled together after Putin's invasion in 2022. I'd say the Biden administration really has played an admirable role since 2022 in unifying the alliance and pulling a variety of countries together to try to support Ukraine. But the last few months, that's been kind of an awkward meeting, because the US officials, through no fault of their own, have shown up not completely empty handed, but not with

their hands as full as they'd like, and maybe kind of hurting their credibility as they were urging others to do more because of congressional inaction, if I'm being specific.

But the passage of this legislation, hopefully signing into law, will create a different climate, if you will, at the Ukraine Defense Contact Group, and allow the US to continue to play that, I would say, important valuable leadership role in leading by example and encouraging our European allies to do more. So many of them are doing a lot, but many of the countries have been underfunding defense for so long, so their arsenals are not what they should be. Their defense industrial based production capacity is not what it should be. A lot of them are moving the right direction, that will take time. But in this interim period of one to two years, I'd say the US arsenal of democracy has a unique role to play, and it is very positive to me to see us stepping up to that role.

Joe Dougherty:

Thanks Brad and Mark and John. I do hope the three of you can address a little bit about US national security and allied national security interests in defending Ukraine, especially as that's part of the debate going on in Capitol Hill. Brad, maybe you get that started on that.

Bradley Bowman:

Sure. I won't go on too long. I can go a long time on this topic because I feel strongly about it. I had a chance to discuss a little bit yesterday on C-SPAN's Washington Journal. But Mark, let me start with Mark, just agreeing with Mark's point earlier that there's sometimes a tendency in Washington to view what's happening in the Middle East or in Europe or Indo-Pacific as separate, and in some ways they are, in some ways they're not. And I completely agree that what we do or don't do in Ukraine is going to have an impact on deterrence in Indo-Pacific. You might say, "Eh, how's that? Is that some sort of sketchy beltway argument there? What's the logic behind it?" Well, the logic is actually quite clear for anyone who understands deterrence. Deterrence, again, I won't give an hour long lecture on this, but it's in the perception, it's in the mind of the adversary.

It's the perception of what? It's their perception of political will and military capability. So absolutely we need to be doing a lot more in the Indo-Pacific to make Taiwan a porcupine, to strengthen our defense posture, to make clear that we have the military capability to make PRC aggression in the Taiwan Strait not pay and be too costly. But there's also their assessment of political will. You can be a 10 foot giant with the best weapons in the world, but if no one believes you're going to use those weapons, what's the point? And that's been a little bit of the danger in the Middle East, arguably. We're the biggest bodybuilder in the gym, but we sometimes don't throw punches. So I do believe, I can't prove it, I do believe that the catastrophe in Afghanistan was at least on Vladimir Putin's mind when he did what he did in 2022.

And interestingly, a lot of Republicans make that argument and believe that. A lot of Republicans on the Hill, some of whom voted against the Ukraine legislation. So my respectful comment to members who may be saying that the Afghanistan catastrophe informed Putin's thinking about what he could do in Ukraine. Well follow that logic a little further, and don't we think a failure in Ukraine would impact Beijing's thinking about Taiwan? Of course it would, because think about it: In Ukraine, what have we been doing? We've been spending less than 3% of what we spend on the Pentagon over the same time period to simply pass a baseball bat over the back fence to our neighbor who's dealing with a home invader, to try to bruise that home invader so badly that he reconsiders his line of work and doesn't attack our home next.

So if we don't even have the political will to spend 3% of what we spend on the Pentagon to help Ukrainians defend their homes by simply giving them weapons where no American service members are

fighting and dying, then what's a logical conclusion for Beijing? The logical conclusion is they couldn't even maintain that for more than two and a half, three years. So why would I, Beijing, believe that they're going to send hundreds or thousands of Americans to fight and potentially die in the Taiwan Strait? So HR McMaster and I wrote on this in Newsweek earlier this year, and I completely agree that what happens or doesn't happen in Ukraine is very, very important to deterrence in the Taiwan Strait, and the logic is what I just laid out. So I'll stop there. Thanks.

Joe Dougherty:

Mark. Your time in Europe? Concur?

Mark Montgomery:

Yeah, so I think Brad hit it, and I said earlier my piece on the value is had on deterrence. I think that's all I had. I'll pass it to John.

John Hardie:

Nothing really to add except the quick point that the Taiwanese are some of the greatest proponents of Ukraine aid, so this goes to Brad's point on China.

Bradley Bowman:

I'm glad you mentioned that, John, because that's a little bit of an awkward reality for those who are arguing that the United States should sacrifice Ukraine to focus on the higher priority of Taiwan. I believe China is the number one threat we confront, and that threat comes to its most acute form in the Taiwan Strait. But America does have the means to support Israel, Ukraine, and Taiwan at the same time if we make smart decisions and investments. And exactly, the fact that Taipei is a vocal supporter of Ukraine I think tells you a lot about their perspective as someone who's on the front line of potential Chinese aggression about how important the outcome is in Ukraine. Thanks.

Joe Dougherty:

Thank you, Brad. Thank you, Mark. Thank you, John. Okay, we are now at the question and answer portion of today's call. We welcome and encourage your questions. The reminder that you can ask your question by either typing it into the chat box or by utilizing the raise hand feature. I think as we await any questions that do come in, Brad and Mark in particular, if you could spend another minute or two just with your thoughts on the congressional action and what could be next and what might be in the next package going forward down the line.

Mark Montgomery:

I don't think Speaker Johnson's thinking about the next package right now. But what I'll say is, to his credit, Speaker Johnson's put together a good thing and by putting in a reasonably digestible fourth package, the Peace Through Strength Bill, which has the banning of TikTok, the nine different sanctions areas for Iran, some for China, the Repo Act, which allows us to spend about \$5 billion in Russian assets held here in the United States on Ukraine, and then the Stop the Fentanyl portion, these are all things that really the Senate can't hold the whole bill up on.

So what I think's going to happen?... Do I think there's a chance that this gets hotlined or a pushed through overnight... No. I think they're going to force votes in the Senate, there'll be a handful of Republican, maybe even Democrats, because of the Israel issue, that force votes, who try different

techniques to delay. But there'll be a limit to what they can do starting tomorrow. And I would hope that this is out by Wednesday or Thursday so that the President can then sign it. And don't look for the special signing ceremony. They just get the 10 pens together and knock it out quick in the White House so that the stuff can start flowing.

But to me, the big one there is TikTok. That's what changed. On the legislation that was going to take a long time in the Senate and isn't now, it's that. And I'm glad that Senator Cantwell come around on this, but I do not believe the statement that getting the delay from the divestment decision being 180 decision, 180 day, potentially a 365 day decision was all she had wanted to edit or amend in that bill. There would've been more significant changes. That's gone now. So there are some advantages to how Speaker Johnson did this in terms of the will of the house standing forth.

I will say on almost all the sanctions, whether they're the increased ones on Russian oligarchs, the seven or eight ones on Chinese... Excuse me, on Iranian oil missile development, UAV development, the use of human shields, support the Hamas and the Palestinian Jihad, all those, they require our allies and partners to take these sanctions as seriously as us. So there are inherent limitations, even as Congress approves these. And they also require the administration to enforce them with the gusto that they requested the Ukraine, Israel, and Taiwan aid. And I'm not sure they'll necessarily be a perfect match there. So these are important bills, they're going to get through now, the timing's great. But the implementation in terms of the sanctions is something... I think that's one of those things where you're going to have to take the temperature of the patient over the next two to three months, not over the next two to three days like we are on the bills themselves, and that's how fast I expect them to move through.

Joe Dougherty:

Thanks, Mark. We do have some questions. We're going to start with Robbie Gramer over at Foreign Policy. Then we're going to go to Tom Bowman at NPR, Brian Harris at Defense News, then Sam Scov at Defense One. So Robbie, let's start over to you.

Robbie Gramer:

Hey guys, thanks so much for doing this. For Brad, what does this whole six-month saga say about the future of Republican foreign policy? A nice and easy one for you. And for the others, can you give your assessment of our production rates, so some of the most crucial munitions that Ukraine says it needs, like 155s, air defense missiles, what the production rates are today, and the difference that this specific supplemental package makes. Just to the barometer. I mean, is this a total game changer? We were slow, but this is now marginally faster, but we need to keep going. Anything in between? Thanks very much.

Bradley Bowman:

Thanks, Robbie, for the question. Good to hear your voice. Hope you're doing well. I mean, I think I try to call balls and strikes as much as I can, and my assessment is that this is... The delay, the six-month delay tells us that this is not the Republican party of our fathers. It's changed a little bit. And not the entire party... The committee leadership on the key committees continues to be what I would call kind of traditional Republicans in terms of foreign policy. But the fact that you had a majority of Republicans opposing the Ukraine legislation, it's just quite noteworthy, and it's clear to me that there is an internecine battle going on within the Republican party between those who believe, I think wisely, ... that America's interests are best served by American strength and international leadership. And that when we see aggression abroad, there's kind of two or three ways to respond. One is just to let the

aggression stand and I'd say history demonstrates that's pretty foolish. Another is to send arms to partners and allies who are willing to fight our common adversary and defend common interests. And the third is to send U.S. forces. And all the things being equal, if we can secure our interests and counter adversaries by simply sending weapons, then count me in on that. I mean, [many] are ... tired after the experiences in Iraq and Afghanistan and now we have partners in Ukraine who are willing to fight and they're simply asking for that Louisville slugger over the back fence.

And I think we'd be quite foolish not to pass a whole bunch of Louisville sluggers over the back fence. And so yeah, I think we're seeing a fight between those who believe in international leadership and those who are falling prey, I think because they're ill-informed, to isolationist tendencies that will not serve our country and its interests very well. And so I don't believe it's determined yet how that battle is going to work out. And former President Trump is, I'd say both a source of some of these issues and also a symptom of some of these issues. And so we will see what happens. But I'd say this vote last week is a dramatic example of that struggle within the party about what kind of country we want to be and what's necessary to defend our interests.

Mark Montgomery:

Hey, I'll jump in there on the first part and I'll try to answer the second and pass it to John to finish that up. So on the first part, on the Republican Party, I'll say we're a small think tank or small do tank. I mean, we like to think of ourselves, but I'm disappointed in some of these larger think tanks, particularly heritage. I mean, I get Quincy. Quincy's been with strangers forever. I'd have been shocked if they supported this kind of thing. They laid out. But Heritage, it is just unacceptable for the think tank of Ronald Reagan, Ronald Reagan's legacy to be against this kind of investment in an ally or partner putting their blood up and just asking for our treasure. And I think it's very appropriate that Speaker Johnson called it the Peace through Strength bill, the fourth one. That's an exact dig at this idea, an exact statement that Ronald Reagan would be supporting this kind of action against an attack by China Russia and Iran.

And then on the munitions, it is a game changer, but you have to take it in three parts. There's the FY 2024 appropriations bill agreed to only three or four weeks ago that confirmed six different weapons systems having multi-year contracting and increased funding for each of the kind of weapons systems that really matter. Then the FY '25 budget came in and really put some high numbers in. There's a weapon system called the long range anti-ship cruise missile to jump from 38 to 75 to 200 over three years showing that we've gotten the production going. And then there's the money in the supplemental that helps build the defense industrial base to not just the appropriations bills max the production.

This increases what that level of production can be. So those three things taken together, the FY '24 approves the FY '25 budget, which still needs to be worked through. And the supplemental... All three of them Ukraine, Israel, and Taiwan each with some contributions. Taken together, this is a significant investment in munitions. The historic bill payer of the last 30 years, every DOD budget, munitions was the bill payer from the 100% that a COCOM would want to the 25 or 30% that we'd eventually have in the final appropriations bill. This is going to address that issue. And by the way, it needs to be historic because our deficit is historic and it's being stressed by multiple conflicts. So this is absolutely the right thing to do and fantastically well-timed.

John Hardie:

Just to add on to the munitions part of the question. I mean, Doug Bush from the Army has given pretty good rates on .155 millimeter artillery shells, which is at least from my perspective, the most important thing for Ukraine in terms of munitions. I just say that in terms of the supplemental, for giving from 70-

80K shells per month to the ultimate target of a 100K shells per month by 2025, the supplemental money was really important for that. And you've heard administration officials say on multiple occasions you couldn't get there without that money. Whether the delay is also going to cause a delay in that when we reach that target, I'm not sure. But if you don't do that, I think any sort of conversation about Ukraine trying its hand again that offensive next year would just be kind of silly because I mean they're going to have a tough time as it is even if we do hit that target with reaching high enough artillery superiority to make a difference. But without it, I think there would've really been no shot.

Joe Dougherty:

Thanks, John. Robby, great questions. Tom Bowman over to you.

Tom Bowman:

Yeah, a couple of questions on the fighting season this year. Of course, last year the hope was for Ukraine to push through the land bridge in the south. There was some criticism from Pentagon officials and others saying they split their forces and some to the east south. They were not successful in breaking that land bridge. So what do you see operationally and offensively for the Ukrainians this year? And if they can't achieve any sort of breakthrough, if it's being on the defensive, will that further cause some people, particularly Republicans to say, "You know what? This isn't going to work. We're going to have to have negotiations." Talk about that.

John Hardie:

I can take it if you like, or at least the first part of that. I mean, the reality is this year for Ukraine is going to be a defensive one, and it really should be if they're playing their cards right, given the shortages of men and material. It's not just because of the delay in U.S. aid. This was always going to be a tougher year on those fronts. And so that even going back in, if you look at what looks like me and others were writing at the end of last year, this is a year or to absorb Russia's offensive potential. And then put the pieces in place to try to do it [try another Ukrainian offensive] again next year, in terms of training and making the right investments in production of shells, filling in some of the enabler capability gaps that plagued Ukraine's 2023 offensive, like engineering equipment, short-range air defense, et cetera, et cetera. So the delay in the aid has put us behind the eight-ball definitely in putting those pieces together. And also on the Ukrainian side, the delay on passing the mobilization bill for many months has put us behind the eight-ball as well. So hopefully we can still make that transition to helping Ukraine go back on offense next year. But I'm not entirely sure.

Mark Montgomery:

A couple thoughts on this. I agree that this is a defensive year. I think their goals this year need to be onboarding new soldiers and they've changed their conscription age and a few other things. And then training them in a very deliberate what could be longer process in Poland and elsewhere to make sure they have their forces... Their ability to survive the first few days of combat is higher because then once they can get through that, the survivability rate goes up. So increasing that, the quality of the force, getting it ready, I think it's figuring out how to get ATTACMs and then F-16 integrated. And a good reminder to all of us, we sometimes forget because we watched the complete failure of Russian large scale maneuver warfare, which shocked a lot of us.

I mean, as someone who is at UCOM assessing the Russians constantly, I would've been 100% wrong in my assessment of their ability to be the only other military besides our own that could do large scale maneuver warfare. They couldn't. But what's lost on that is that the Ukrainians also, were not in a

position to do medium to large scale maneuver warfare last summer. And that's because courage can't fuel offensive warfare in the way it can fuel defensive warfare. I think it's the integration of pieces and parts, artillery and infantry, air support, whether it's from drones or conventional air support with artillery, all those kinds of things, the maneuver of logistics, all that is really hard. They're working on it now. A little frustrated. I've heard the same things you have, kind of armchair quarterbacking at the tactical level from Washington, probably not helpful.

On the other hand, I think it is a correct assessment that the failures in that in last counteroffensive by the Ukrainians was due to their own inability to integrate all their forces properly. That takes time and training and breaking of some of the lessons learned that they had from years of pre-2014 training. And so from my perspective, 2025 is the year to think about. And look, I get it, that becomes another political pressure point, but they can't go sacrifice troops because they have an artificial political deadline in 2024. I think that would potentially break the back of the Ukrainian army. So I think they have the right plan and it requires deliberate patience and caution in 2024, and allow the Russians to beat their head against the offensive wall.

Bradley Bowman:

Hey, Joe, real quick. I would just say that.... Thank you, Tom, good to hear your voice. Hope you're doing well. I think sometimes in foreign and defense policy, all that you can hope for in the short term is what I said earlier, is a catastrophe avoidance strategy. And that's kind of frankly what I was arguing for in Afghanistan, that if we withdrew, we knew the outcome. Yeah, it wasn't clear that our current force posture there was going to lead us to the outcome we wanted, but it was going to avoid a catastrophe at a minimum. And so I really view this as stopping the momentum, if you will, of Russian tactical offensives this year and then building some of the momentum for offensive operations next year.

I will be shocked if Ukraine has the ability to put together any sort of operational or strategic level offensives this year. I don't expect that. I'm not sure I'd even advise it. And I think one of the key lessons of the first year or two of Ukraine was that what Mark Montgomery and people with military experience understand when it comes to ground warfare is that combined arms offensive operations is much more difficult than the defense. And so I think we're going to have to have some serious discussions with Ukrainians about why offensives in the past didn't work well, learn those lessons and try to do better, but that's going to come in 2025, I think not 2024. And with deference to John Hardie, I mean, we're seeing messaging from the Russians that they're interested in Kharkiv city.

So avoiding the loss of major cities, population centers this year, stopping or slowing the Russian momentum, avoiding that catastrophe I keep talking about, and then putting in the reforms and delivering the weapons necessary to see more results in 2025. But in our microwave culture, we tend to want immediate results. And sometimes things are just hard and you can't get immediate results. I think Ukrainian success is not guaranteed, but Russian success is if we stop supporting Ukraine. And for me, that alone is a reason to continue to support Ukraine, even if I can't give you a one to two year strategy that gives the eviction of Russian forces from Crimea, which is probably not going to happen anytime soon.

Joe Dougherty:

Thanks, Brad. We've got several questions that are in the line. We've got Bryant Harris is going to be next, followed by Sam. Let's go with defense one. Then we have I think four questions in the chat, so we will get through these quickly. Thanks for everybody's patience. Bryant, over to you.

Brian Harris:

Thanks for doing this. Related to the first two, which one, given how long it took to get this supplemental through, it doesn't seem like there's by any means a guarantee we can do another package for Ukraine and that plus just with our munitions industrial base, it takes a little while to replenish these things. Obviously, the Pentagon has its own munitions requirements, which I would assume limits how much we can send through PDA in the future. And so basically with those two things combined, I'm wondering how you see this ending, see for Ukraine, given the fact it seems both politically and just in terms of our industrial based capacity, that we can't keep doing this indefinitely. Unless the premise of my question is wrong, in which case, please do let me know. Thanks.

Joe Dougherty:

Why don't we start with Brad then over to Mark?

Bradley Bowman:

Yeah, just very quickly, I know we've got a lot of questions. I would just say that on the Pentagon requirements thing, and again with deference to Mark who worked these issues in EUCOM, I don't know what the classified numbers are on some of these munitions for EUCOM in terms of what we need for ourselves and for worst case scenarios in Europe. But I, for one, would be someone who would argue for taking a little risk. Because what is the purpose of our military requirements in Europe? It's largely to deal with a large scale Russian invasion. Well, newsflash, that's exactly what we have. And we have a partner who's fighting has resulted in more than 7,000 armored vehicles and tanks lost, hundreds of aircraft shot down and a whole bunch of ships sitting on the bottom of the Black Sea.

So I would be a voice for saying, let's take a little risk and sending more, not less, because the purpose of those weapons are there, is already being served in Ukraine by the Ukrainians. So take a little risk on a requirement, I'd say that. I think I've been saying this for a year or two now. We're going to see things in Ukraine measured in years, not months. And I do believe it's sustainable. I believe we will see what the new percentage is. But up to this point, as I said earlier, it's been 2.7% of what we've spent on the Pentagon over the same time period. That number will increase a little bit with this new package, but no Americans fighting or dying. So I think it is absolutely sustainable from a military strategic perspective. We'll see whether it's politically sustainable.

Mark Montgomery:

No, I agree with that, and I'd say it's going to at best be 2.7%. I think it might get slightly lower. I mean, this really is the most efficient defenestration of a principal adversary to the country is to be able to... I mean, this is something like 17th century British Machiavellians would be like, "Good job, America. You actually got this thing figured out."

Joe Dougherty:

Thanks, gentlemen. We've got several journalists on this call who have put themselves in hard arms way by going to Ukraine and seeing it firsthand. Sam Skove is one of them over at defense one. Sam, over to you.

Sam Skove:

Hey guys, just testing my mic. Everything okay? Great. So a lot of the aid packages before were focused on the counter offensive. There are these big huge packages. A lot of it was focused on armor. Besides the focus on obviously shells and air defense, do you expect any sort of differences in aid packages that more reflect Ukraine's defensive position right now? Perhaps channeling more money into training,

more of a focus on munitions that are more useful for the defense, especially considering it's a tricky line to walk because obviously they do need to get back on the offensive at some point.

Mark Montgomery:

I'll give you a couple because I think there are. The first that comes to mind for me is drones. The US is finally starting to get some drones that are usable in a jam, jamming or heavy EW environment. So you might see some of those. Those will probably more likely be under the US AI, the Ukraine Security Assistance Initiative because the US Army doesn't even have those drones yet. The drones that the US Army has tends to be the ones that are still fairly susceptible to jamming an EW, which we've seen by pulling them forward and testing them in Ukraine.

So I think you could see some US AI money and even some of the State department I&L money. That's the International Narcotics Bureau over at State, which does the border patrol support to Ukraine. I think you see some US drones in there, and that's a little different. I also think you might see a few more kind of Rube Goldberg... How do we get air defense effectors those missiles onto a system that could fire them? Because we're getting low in the number of the AMRAAM missile that goes on the NASAMs. And the PAC-III is kind of

Mark Montgomery:

... a slightly jaw-dropping two to two million bucks a copy when you transfer it, depending which version it is. I imagine that you're going to see us try to work that counter drone air defense effectors that might be a little cheaper. From my mind, those are two of the kind of more interesting initiatives that could be pushed in this one. We definitely, not knowing that there's another package coming, I think there's going to be a little bit of hesitance on the things like Patriots, where it's three million a round. That's a pricey weapon for a constrained budget.

Sam Skove:

Thanks. And to open up the question, it's kind of like what lessons have we learned about providing aid to Ukraine that affect our aid going forward? And I think price, that's a really interesting point. Yeah, Brad or John.

Mark Montgomery:

I think on munitions particularly, despite the fact that we didn't buy enough munitions, we were happy to have a high price. In other words, the United States with an 800-some, \$80 billion or \$840 billion defense budget, I think is more comfortable paying a premium for munitions that protect your forces. We're paying that premium right now in the Red Sea on a every two or three days basis with the Houthi rounds coming in.

When you're trying to help a beleaguered democracy under threat, under a constant munitions threat where zero defect is not the golden rule, they don't sit there every day in Kyiv and say, "Well, thank God the critical infrastructure wasn't hit today." It's hit every day. So with that kind of mentality, you have to have a cheaper round, and that's one of the things we've learned how we drive down that cost.

I think the Israelis are experiencing it too. When you have enemies on five sides, you kind of want your round, you got to get your cost per round down. That's something the United States didn't concentrate on. I think as we think about Taiwan and a cross-Strait invasion, Russian actions in the area of Kharkiv, Hezbollah attacks against Iran, we're starting to see that, hey, we got to find cheaper munitions. We'll be drawn to directed energy, for example, and other things, but we've got to get the cost per round down.

Joe Dougherty:

Thanks, Sam. Great question. Brad, I'm going to ask you to start with Caroline's question in the chat. I'll save time by not reading it because I think you have already seen it there.

Bradley Bowman:

Yeah, thanks, Joe. I can take a swing. Caroline, thank you for your question. I'm not sure I can answer all of it, but I'll take an initial swing.

Yeah, what I see you asking is essentially in part, what is the rate of consumption for what will be provided and when would they need more? I would have to go system by system and I don't have a lot of that information currently available, so I can't speak specifically to that. So I'll fall back on the political analysis.

And the political analysis is, and I'm eager to hear from Mark on this as well, I can't see what we just went through in the House of Representatives happening again before the presidential election. I think the speaker risked his political livelihood to get this one across the line. And so, even if there is a need, I don't see that coming before the election, the presidential election.

So if you're the Pentagon, if you're the Ukrainians, that means, okay, take this major supplemental package and spend it as wisely as possible in terms of what you send and when you send it, and assume that there won't be another big package coming before election day. That would be my educated guess on the political dynamics regardless of what the consumption rates would be for this respective munitions.

Joe Dougherty:

John Hardie, you want to address the consumption?

John Hardie:

I would just say that to hold a decent defense, Ukraine really needs something like maybe 3,000 to 6-7,000, 155 millimeter artillery shells a month. To get towards offense, you probably, depending on how much the Russians are firing, you probably need at least double that to even be in the conversation and to have a realistic shot, probably more like three, four times that.

So just keep that in the back of your mind when you're looking at the quantities being sent out, assuming that Pentagon actually discloses them.

Go ahead.

Bradley Bowman:

Sorry, John, I didn't mean to interrupt. I thought you were done. Go ahead.

John Hardie:

I was saying I agree with Brad. I think if you look at when this package came about, it was always going to be for the totality of fiscal year 2024. Obviously, much of that fiscal year has elapsed at this point, so I'd agree that we're not going to get another one until fiscal year 2025 at the earliest.

Bradley Bowman:

Just a quick comment on the drone thing, very short, is that, and I think it's relevant to the last two questions is, and John Hardie and I wrote on this, and others have as well at FDD, the US defense

industrial base is very good at producing exquisite, very expensive drones. Those are helpful and great, and I'm sure Ukraine would love lots of those, but what they really need are some of these less expensive drones in large quantities, these first person view systems, that sort of thing.

Our industrial base, as awesome as it is, has struggled to produce those in large quantities. And that's one of the reasons why we argued for permitting some of this funding to be spent in Ukraine so they could take advantage of their nascent efforts to produce these. And so, that has both offense and defensive implications. Increasingly, concealment on the battlefield is hard and cover is really hard. In other words, if you can be seen, you're dead.

In the defense, those drones can help see what the enemy is doing. It can also serve as reconnaissance, intelligence surveillance reconnaissance, putting a cheap drone out there instead of a human being. So it has both implications for both offense and defense.

And then when you talk about switch blades or other kind of drones that are actually kamikaze drones, those can be very helpful as well.

Joe Dougherty:

Mark, I'm going to ask you to... Can you address [inaudible 01:00:03] question and then John, address [inaudible 01:00:06] question?

Mark Montgomery:

Yeah, with just a minute left, I'll go quickly. I'll say, look, first, yes, Russia's made great headway and the amount of time and effort and blood that they're going to have to exert to regain what Russia took is much higher. It's a two to one or three to one ratio to recover land that's taken.

Now, the most critical thing here though is we got to remember that when it looked like we might not deliver, the Europeans are like, they had a come to Jesus moment where they're like, "Oh my, we better start doing some of this ourselves." And you saw some actions happening, artillery production rates, group gatherings to figure out how much money to give. Although, usually, whenever they said a number, it was over an extended number of years. But we need to turn to the Europeans, say, "Oh, not so fast shipmates. We're doing our 61 billion or 48 billion in security stuff. We expect you to continue with this effort."

What we could do then is through Assistant Secretary of Defense Wallander's management of that control group, the control group and Ramstein's distribution by having more European stuff to give away, the US stuff can take longer. We can play this game out much longer if the Europeans come to the table with the kind of numbers they thought they might have to do if we left the game. That would be a real game changer and winner.

And then, finally, I would tell you, we all have to back... I think the administration needs to back off the Ukrainians on attacking Russian oil refineries. This idea that they're limiting it is inappropriate. They have got to hit the Russian center of gravity where they're at. The Russian center of gravity is their own economic weakness. If you can hit those refineries, you can drive this down.

I get it, it's not great for November to have oil prices go up. On the other hand, we have two major adversaries, Iran and Russia, who are using oil to finance their wars against democracies. And we don't want to affect oil prices over elections in the United States, that's inappropriate, and it's something that ought to be attacked. So get on the Europeans and let the Ukrainians go at the Russian oil refineries.

Joe Dougherty:

John Hardie, [inaudible 01:02:14] question.

John Hardie:

Yeah, in terms of prospects, I would say that, like I said earlier, it's going to be tough if you're Ukraine even with the aid. I think the saving grace is the Russian force quality is also pretty low — both sides have lost a lot of their better trained troops, including the critical junior officer corps. It means a lot of enlisted men, NCOs have been elevated from the ranks, often with very abbreviated officer training. And so when you see that across the force, it just means, for one thing, scaling offensive operations, it's tougher.

We can debate what Mark said earlier about the Russian inability to do large-scale maneuver warfare at the outset, but it's certainly at this point in the war very, very diminished, which is part of the reason why you see these Russian assaults just kind of eke out maybe a kilometer here or a kilometer there, and it's kind of hard to generate momentum that way. So hopefully for Ukraine's sake, that'll continue. They can continue to attrit the Russian force and eventually exhaust its offensive potential.

Joe Dougherty:

Brad, [inaudible 01:03:15] got the last half of his question. What do the Ukrainians need to accomplish in the next period to ensure that robust American support remains beyond this 61 billion? Can some of these 101 Republicans be won over that supporting Ukraine is in the US interest?

Bradley Bowman:

I'd love to hear Mark's response to that as well. What we've seen is that Republicans that travel to Ukraine come back changed and more in line with what we're arguing here. But the very people who you'd want to go tend not to want to travel there. So that's a little bit of a problem.

And so, unfortunately, I would say probably a lot of the battle lines are drawn for most of these Republicans. And probably the decisive factor for them will be where former President Trump comes down. And so, if he is predictable, which he is sometimes not, then there's maybe not much hope. But if he can come round on some of what he's saying regarding Ukraine and Russia, then maybe you could see some of these Republicans that voted against it changing their views. But yeah, so I'm eager to hear from Mark. Any thoughts on that?

Mark Montgomery:

My one thought, double down on the idea, a wicked high percentage of Republican congressmen who visited Kyiv while it's in a combat situation have voted for the package. And those who did not visit, there's a large percentage who voted against the package.

So the number one thing we can do is continue to encourage people you gain insight through observation and experience. Get to Ukraine. If after you visit you don't think they deserve support, fine. But I think that'd be a very small percentage of members of the House after a visit to Kyiv.

Joe Dougherty:

I know we're going along, but we do have some more questions lined up. So thank you for those of you on the call who are still with us. Appreciate it because we know that your day is quite busy.

Sam, we're going to get back to you, but first we've got Caitlin from the New York Post who's going to ask her question. Caitlin is just back from spending some time in Ukraine.

Caitlin, over to you, please.

Caitlin Doornbos:

Thank you so much. Yeah, so when I was over there, I visited a bunch of logistics hubs where Ukraine was trying to put together the scraps of equipment that are left and destroyed, but they are lacking spare parts. So I wondered if you guys have heard anything, it's not as sexy as sending new ATACMs, but we've sent billions of dollars worth of equipment over there and they're wondering, can we get the spare parts just to get the things that you've already sent back on the battlefield?

Mark Montgomery:

I think we'll have to ask our Chinese supply chain if they'll provide those parts. I'm being facetious.

Caitlin Doornbos:

Oh my God.

Mark Montgomery:

I think the answer is broadly that we do struggle with our own supply chain. We do an embarrassingly high level of cannibalization between parts to get ships underway or aircraft squadrons fully functional as they deploy. So we suffer from this as well.

Having said that, they're an extremist, they can do it. One of the problems is they don't have the higher level re-machining facility. So when something's damaged, you could re-machine it. They don't have that. We did give UCOM quite a bit of money in this. They have nearly between nine and \$11 billion, how you count it to kind of do this kind of support.

So I think the short answer is we could do better. The long answer is it's really hard, and so we'll have to work on that. But that's one of those things, you're absolutely right, as you get into sustained combat like this, and by the way, this is not the kind of planning we've been doing for the last 20 years.

One of the sad stories of Iraq and Afghanistan is the large amount of material we've just left behind on the battlefield because it was easier to leave behind than repair or return. So this is not our long suit, but I think for the exact reason you said, which is they don't have another option and it's a big savings. If the PDA is for three parts, visa Abrams, I mean, that's a bad example, visa a striker vehicle or a Bradley, just three or four parts to get it functioning. So I guess the short answer is I think we'll be working on it.

Bradley Bowman:

Caitlin, I would just say that it's a great question. I agree with you, it doesn't get enough attention. We spent a lot of time on this call talking about munitions, fire it and then it's done. But for the systems that launch those munitions or move the troops around the battlefield, F-16, M1 Abrams, Bradleys, Patriot, these are complex systems that have parts that break. And to keep them on the battlefield, you got to have the supply network in place and the logistics in place, and that is essential and does not get enough attention. It's a longstanding problem.

John Hardie:

I would only add that some of our European allies are doing a little bit better job with this, or at least taking steps to do a little bit better job in the future. So we could perhaps emulate that.

Bradley Bowman:

It's also one... Oh, sorry. I was just going to say it's also one reason why Caitlin, ideally, you don't want to send five different types of a system. So we argue, me and an Air Force fellow argued, don't send them a tank petting zoo, four or five different versions of tanks. Pick one or two and send those. Why? Because

when you have all these different systems, they require different parts and that makes the logistics and supply effort all the more complicated.

Joe Dougherty:

So, Sam, a related question. The last major aid packages were focused on the counter offensive. For these next disbursements, do you expect more defense oriented goods, more aid focused on maintenance training to keep Ukraine in the fight?

Mark Montgomery:

Yes. I think that's a very good conclusion you've drawn. One thing I'd say about 155 is it's a swing munition. It can be defense, it can be offense. The air defense is more clearly defense, but the training and maintenance could be either way, but it'll be about the defense, I think.

So, broadly, I think you'll see investments in those areas immediately and oriented towards, I think a defensive mission, as it is this first batch of 155s clearly about defense and blunting the Russian offensive actions.

Bradley Bowman:

I agree. One minute you're firing because you're on the offensive, the [next] minute you're firing because you're being attacked. So the same system can go from one to the other quickly. Sometimes it's hard to differentiate.

John Hardie:

And part of our own decision-making in the U.S. about what to send, when to send it is going to be driven by Ukraine's force-generation timetable, and that'll in turn depend on the situation of the battlefield and the extent to which they mobilize additionally. So they're currently standing up additional brigades. That's never really stopped. But whether they sort of get thrown in right away or are able to go to Germany for months of training will depend on some of the decisions they make as well.

Joe Dougherty:

Brad, Mark, John, thank you all very much for lending your expertise here. To the journalists on the call, thank you for taking the time that you spent with us. We know that you're busy and you could have spent it in a lot of important places and you spent it with us, so we're very grateful for that. Very great thanks to [inaudible 01:10:39] on the other side of the wall, if you will, doing some terrific work to make sure all of this went smoothly.

If you need to follow up with any of our experts here, please email me at press@FDD.org and we will schedule a time for you to talk. We can also have a one-on-one conversation or even a small group gathering, if that is helpful.

In closing, a reminder that FDD is a nonpartisan research institute focused on national security and foreign policy. We do closely monitor press at FDD.org, not quite 24/7, but not very far off of that. Please send us an email at any time and we'll be glad to connect you with these experts and other FDD experts.

With that, this does conclude today's call.