

# Can Ukraine Fight Without U.S. Aid?

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## KEY TAKEAWAYS

- Continued U.S. aid remains vital for Ukraine's long-term effectiveness on the battlefield because Ukraine heavily relies on U.S. air defense systems and intelligence, among other forms of support.
- Although Ukraine's own defense industry—which supplies roughly 30 percent of the Ukrainian Armed Forces' military equipment—and European industry and support are growing, Ukraine and Europe cannot fully replace U.S. capabilities. A sudden cutoff would strongly undermine Ukrainian military ability against Russia.
- If U.S. aid cuts occur, Russia is likely to increase its offensive activity on Ukraine's front line if it perceives Ukrainian stockpiles to be low, undermining the successes that the past three years of U.S. support have made possible.
- Congress is considering several pieces of legislation to aid Ukraine against Russia, including by imposing tougher sanctions on Russia, reauthorizing lend-lease authority for military equipment, and expanding investments for rebuilding Ukraine.

## BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT

The United States has committed \$66.5 billion in military assistance to bolster Ukraine's defense, as well as over \$50 billion in financial aid since the start of the war. Around 90 percent of this military aid has consisted of money spent in the United States to build new weapons or to replace weapons sent to Ukraine from U.S. stockpiles. The United States has also provided training to Ukraine's armed forces and significant intelligence support.

Ukraine produces roughly 30 percent of its weapons domestically. Ukraine has developed an impressive drone industry, producing nearly 2 million drones in 2024. It has increased artillery and mortar ammunition production to 2.5 million rounds annually. Despite these improvements, Ukraine is still heavily reliant on foreign assistance.

Europe provides a notable portion of this assistance. In addition to supplying various military systems—for example, IRIS-T air defense systems, Storm Shadow cruise missiles, and Leopard 2 and T-72 tanks—European states have trained over 70,000 Ukrainian troops (more than the United States). Europe, however, would have difficulty filling gaps left by a U.S. aid cut, with particular gaps in long-range strike systems (HIMARS and ATACMS) and certain air defense systems (such as a replacement for the Patriot system). Further, Europe does not have the ability to replace U.S. intelligence support, which facilitates long-range precision strikes.

If the United States cuts off aid, Ukraine's long-term prospects depend on Europe's ability to bring new military production online, Ukraine's ability to innovate, and the speed at which both of these can occur. Even if Europe and Ukraine can eventually fill most of the gaps left by a U.S. cutoff, they would have to do so before Russia can take advantage of the dip in Ukrainian fighting power.

## LEGISLATIVE AND POLICY IMPLICATIONS

Several pending measures in Congress aim to extend assistance to Ukraine, such as the Ukraine Support Act (H.R.2913) and the Freedom First Lend Lease Act (H.R.1158). Both of these bills would reinstate the Ukrainian lend-lease legislation until FY 2028 and FY 2027, respectively, while the Ukraine Support Act has wider symbolic messaging and imposes some sanctions on Russia. The Ukraine Support Act also establishes the Ukraine Reconstruction Trust Fund, in addition to current U.S. government-led investment funds. The Freedom First Lend Lease Act has bipartisan sponsorship, while the Ukrainian Support Act is currently only sponsored by Democrat representatives. The Fiscal Year 2026 National Defense Authorization Act, which is in its initial stages, could also be used to extend or expand Ukraine aid mechanisms.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

- Evaluate options to extend and accelerate aid to Ukraine and ensure that already-committed support continues flowing, particularly through the Ukraine Security Assistance Initiative (USAI).
- Consider continuing, or increasing, U.S. economic, military, humanitarian, and reconstruction support that is critical to Ukraine. This strengthens the U.S. and Ukrainian position at the negotiating table with Putin and sends a message of commitment to other U.S. allies.

### Additional Resources and Contact Information

Iselin Brady et al., "Can Ukraine Fight Without U.S. Aid? Seven Questions to Ask," CSIS, May 19, 2025, <https://www.csis.org/analysis/can-ukraine-fight-without-us-aid-seven-questions-ask>.

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Congress is also considering legislation for expansive new sanctions on Russia. The bipartisan Sanctioning Russia Act of 2025 (S.1241 and H.R.2548) would enact harsher sanctions on Russia and entities that purchase Russian energy, as well as expand restrictions on Russian sovereign debt and financial transactions. These sanctions would increase economic pressure on Russia and further limit Moscow's ability to fund military actions in Ukraine and elsewhere.

## CHALLENGES AND RISKS

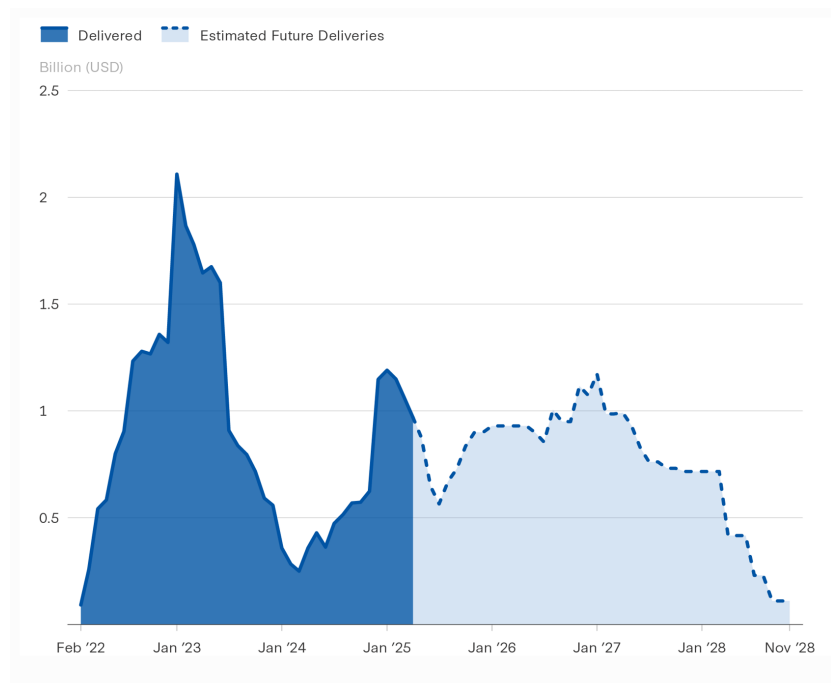
**Battlefield risk:** If the United States cuts aid to Ukraine, Russia will likely take advantage of any resulting weaknesses and increase attacks. European states and Ukraine itself do not have the defense industrial base to fill the gap of a U.S. cutoff. In the instance of a cutoff, Russia would be better able to conquer Ukrainian territory, and Ukrainian morale could suffer.

**Diplomatic risk:** A U.S. cutoff would send a message of irresolution to other U.S. allies and partners, including those facing a threat from China. It would also decrease Moscow's incentives to negotiate an end to the war in Ukraine.

**Economic risk:** A significant portion of assistance to Ukraine has flowed through the U.S. private defense industry, supporting domestic weapons manufacturers. Suspending aid could therefore have economic repercussions for U.S. production and manufacturing.

FIGURE 1

### Estimated Deliveries of U.S. Military Equipment to Ukraine



Source: Analysis performed by Mark F. Cancian and Chris Park. See, for reference, Mark F. Cancian and Chris Park, "Is Ukraine Now Doomed?," CSIS, *Critical Questions*, March 1, 2025, <https://www.csis.org/analysis/ukraine-now-doomed>.