

FREEDOM FOR UKRAINE

Pictures: AFP VIA GETTY IMAGES

‘Thank you, America!’



Blast... Ukrainian troops fire Bohdana howitzer in Kharkiv region yesterday

Zelensky praises US aid that will help get shells firing again

By **Mark Reynolds**

VOLODYMYR Zelensky has thanked the US after lawmakers finally voted to give embattled Ukraine £49billion more military aid in its war with Russia.

The Ukraine president said he was grateful for the move which will bolster his troops' ability to fight off Vladimir Putin's forces.

After months of delays, America's House of Representatives approved the new aid on Saturday.

The much-stalled measure still had vocal opponents in Congress and it took a fragile bipartisan deal to get the controversial massive package through.

Jubilant

A jubilant Mr Zelensky described the support as "vital".

He claimed the aid would stop the war from expanding and so save thousands of lives.

Issuing a new rallying cry, Mr Zelensky said: "Today we received the awaited decision on the US aid package that we long fought for. And a very significant one."

"Our warriors on the front lines, as well as our cities and villages suffering from Russian terror, will feel it." He expressed his relief and gratitude in an impassioned speech, adding: "I thank everyone who supported our package – this is a solution for protecting life."

"I personally thank Speaker Mike Johnson and all American hearts who believe, as we do in Ukraine, that Russian evil

Help... Zelensky and Biden, inset

THE vote by US politicians to approve £49billion of aid for Ukraine has been greeted with one overwhelming emotion in the eastern European country – relief.

From Kyiv to Odesa and from Kharkiv to Lviv, there was a sense that Congress had finally grasped just how desperate the situation is on the front line.

Sadly, the historic vote from the House of Representatives on Saturday does not mean Ukraine will win its war with Russia – no one is under any illusion that there is still a long way to go.

However, it does mean that in the short term Ukraine will not lose its 26-month conflict against its larger and more powerful neighbour.

This would have become a real possibility within months if the aid programme for

COMMENT

LORD ASHCROFT

Businessman and Philanthropist



Ukraine had, yet again, been blocked. During my most recent visit to Ukraine two months ago, I met military commanders in front-line cities and in the capital Kyiv who all had exactly the same message – their brave soldiers were in urgent need of weapons and ammunition, along with more air defences.

As a nation, Ukraine has defied the odds in holding back, and at times pushing back, the mighty Russian army. But it simply cannot continue its fight without

considerable help from the West. The hope now from my many contacts in Ukraine is that the first weapons and ammunition will arrive very soon, enabling the nation's armed forces to halt what has been a slow but steady advance by Russian troops along parts of the frontline.

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky described the weekend's vote as "vital". US President Joe Biden praised the effort to "answer history's call".

And I am simply overjoyed that common sense has finally prevailed.

● Lord Ashcroft is an international businessman, philanthropist, author and pollster. For more information on his work, visit lordashcroft.com. You can follow him on X/ Facebook @LordAshcroft

must not be winning. I am hopeful that the Bill will be quite quickly passed by the United States Senate and sent to President Biden.

"We appreciate every sign of support for our country and its independence, people, and way of life, which Russia is attempting to bury under the rubble."

He insisted: "America has demonstrated its leadership since the first days of this war."

"Exactly this type of leadership is required to maintain a rules-

based international order and predictability for all nations.

"We will undoubtedly use American assistance to strengthen both of our nations and bring a just end to this war closer – the war that Putin must lose."

"The world rallies behind Ukraine's cause when Ukrainians rally behind independence."

Russia, which is steadily making ground on the front line in the Donbass region, has stressed that fresh injections of money and weapons in Ukraine will not alter the position on the battlefield.

It is unclear when the aid will arrive, but reports suggest the first assistance could be within days. The package will now go to the Senate, which is expected to pass it, before President Joe Biden signs it into law.

It will boost weapons and ammunition systems. Ukraine will also receive more than £7.2billion of economic assis-

tance in the form of "forgivable loans" – ones that do not need to be paid back. The aid comes after Kyiv troops had reportedly run short of munitions, leaving them having to ration shells.

But the Ukrainians have fought on. Images have shown soldiers in Kharkiv firing at Russian positions with a self-propelled howitzer, known as the Bohdana, a weapon developed in Ukraine.

Struggles

Russia invaded Ukraine in February 2022. Since then, tens of thousands of people have been killed or injured on both sides, and millions of Ukrainians have had to flee their homes.

Ukraine says that it desperately needs the aid as it struggles to contain Russian forces. Moscow has accused Ukraine of acting as a proxy for Nato interests after a 2014 coup in Kyiv which removed a Russian-friendly president.

CAMERON VISIT ON RUSSIA SANCTIONS

By **Nina Lloyd**

LORD Cameron is visiting Central Asia to boost ties over fears that trade sanctions on Russia are being side-stepped in neighbouring countries.

On a five-day trip, the Foreign Secretary will travel to Tajikistan, Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan, Kazakhstan and Mongolia to promote business links.

He will warn the region is "at the epicentre of some of the biggest challenges we face". The trip comes as reports suggest luxury UK cars are reaching Moscow through ex-Soviet states. Exports of high-end vehicles were banned by Britain after the invasion of Ukraine.

