

U.S. Sends Seized Iranian Ammunition to Ukraine

More than a million rounds of ammo for AK-47s had been intercepted as Tehran tried to smuggle it to Houthi rebels in Yemen

By Michael R. Gordon
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The U.S. sent Ukraine more than a million rounds of seized small-arms ammunition that Iran had sought to ship to fighters it supports in Yemen, the U.S. Central Command said on Wednesday.

The shipment of the 1.1 million 7.62mm rounds took place on Monday and comes as doubts have grown about the U.S.'s ability to continue long-term security assistance for Kyiv.

The Wall Street Journal reported in February that [the ammunition had been intercepted](#) as Iran was trying to smuggle it to Houthi rebels in Yemen and that the Biden administration was looking at the legal question of how to transfer it to Ukraine.

The ammunition is fired by the AK-47 assault rifle, a Soviet-designed system that is widely used in Eastern Europe. Though obtaining ATACMS long-range missiles and F-16s have been a priority for Kyiv, the ammunition could still help, military experts said.

"Ukrainian forces need help in all categories of munitions, not just high-end systems," said Frederick Kagan, director of the Critical Threats Project at the American Enterprise Institute think tank. "Their increasing reliance on infantry to advance in the south means that even the delivery of the 7.62mm rounds the U.S. seized from Iran to Ukraine matter."

Military cooperation between Moscow and Tehran has intensified over the past year as [Iran has provided attack drones](#) to Russia for its invasion of Ukraine. Russia and Iran are also moving ahead with plans to build a drone factory on Russian territory.

The U.S. move to transfer the ammunition is something of a turnabout that will enable Ukraine to use Iranian ammunition against Tehran's Russian partners.

The Central Command said that munitions had been sent by Iran's Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps in violation of a U.N. Security Council resolution and were intercepted on Dec. 9 when U.S.-led naval forces stopped a dhow named the Marwan 1.

The U.S. obtained legal ownership of the ammunition in July after the Justice Department filed a civil forfeiture claim against the Iranian Guard forces.

The Journal reported in February that the U.S. has also seized thousands of assault rifles and proximity fuses for rocket-propelled grenades from smugglers working for Iran. The Justice Department said in March that those weapons were also the subject of a forfeiture complaint.

The Pentagon [has more than \\$5 billion in weapons](#) it can provide to Ukraine in the coming months. But the House of Representatives balked at providing more funding for Ukraine's military campaign last weekend, setting the stage for weeks of legislative maneuvering.

Iranian-backed militias in the Middle East [haven't attacked U.S. forces since March](#), when a drone launched by a militant group in Iraq killed a U.S. contractor in Syria. But Iran is continuing to supply arms to militias it supports in Iraq, Syria and Yemen, U.S. officials say.