

Zelensky to Visit Washington With U.S. Aid to Ukraine in Doubt

Officials announced that the Ukrainian president would travel to Washington on Tuesday for a last-ditch lobbying effort with President Biden and members of Congress.

By Michael D. Shear and Karoun Demirjian
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President Volodymyr Zelensky of Ukraine will travel to Washington on Tuesday for a last-ditch lobbying effort with President Biden and members of Congress aimed at securing billions of dollars of U.S. aid, officials said on Sunday.

Karine Jean-Pierre, the White House press secretary, said Mr. Zelensky would meet with Mr. Biden at the White House to “underscore the United States’ unshakable commitment” to the embattled nation as it resists Russia’s invasion.

“As Russia ramps up its missile and drone strikes against Ukraine, the leaders will discuss Ukraine’s urgent needs and the vital importance of the United States’ continued support at this critical moment,” Ms. Jean-Pierre said.

Last week, Republicans blocked [a \\$110.5 billion emergency spending bill](#) that includes funding for Ukraine’s war effort, putting in doubt whether the United States would continue helping arm the country in its fight against Russia.

They have argued that any measure to fund Ukraine’s war effort must be coupled with changes to U.S. asylum laws and detention policies, which were not included in the bill.

Mr. Biden and his aides have warned that refusing to support Ukraine in the coming months could pave the way for a victory by President Vladimir V. Putin of Russia. Mr. Zelensky’s chief of staff also said last week that Ukraine could lose the war if the United States delayed the aid.

Republicans have responded by saying that Mr. Biden and Mr. Zelensky have not provided a clear plan for winning the war, which has stalled after dragging on for more than a year and a half.

Mr. Zelensky will have an opportunity to face some of the lawmakers directly on Tuesday morning during a closed-door session with senators, according to a senior Democratic aide. The meeting was arranged by Senator Chuck Schumer of New York, the majority leader, and Senator Mitch McConnell of Kentucky, the Republican leader.

The Ukrainian leader was scheduled to address a similar session of lawmakers remotely last week, but he [canceled at the last minute](#). The meeting devolved into a shouting match between Democratic and Republican senators about the G.O.P.'s border demands.

Mr. Zelensky [last visited Washington in September](#) and held a similar meeting at the Capitol with senators that was widely attended. But he was never invited to address members of the House, where most Republicans have since voted against continuing to support the war. Just days after Mr. Zelensky's visit, Congress decided against adding emergency war assistance for Ukraine in a bill to fund the government, which put that aid in limbo for the first time since Russia invaded in early 2022.

During his September visit, Mr. Zelensky met with Representative Kevin McCarthy, Republican of California and then the speaker; Representative Hakeem Jeffries, Democrat of New York and the minority leader; and a group of senior lawmakers from the national security and appropriations committees. Mr. McCarthy was ousted from the speakership less than two weeks later.

The new speaker, Mike Johnson, is expected to meet with Mr. Zelensky alone this week, according to Raj Shah, a spokesman for Mr. Johnson.

Mr. Zelensky's office said in a statement on Sunday that he would "focus on securing unity among the U.S., Europe and the rest of the world in supporting Ukraine's defense against Russian aggression, as well as strengthening the international order based on rules and respect for the sovereignty of nations."

There is still a significant gap to close in Congress. Senator Christopher S. Murphy, Democrat of Connecticut, who is leading the negotiations for his party, said on NBC's "Meet the Press" on Sunday that the G.O.P.'s latest demands were "unreasonable."

"If I were a cynic, I would say that Republicans have decided to tie support for Ukraine to immigration reform because they want Ukraine aid to fail," he added.

But Senator James Lankford, Republican of Oklahoma, who is leading negotiations for his party, rejected such charges, arguing on CBS's "Face the Nation" that Congress had to tackle both problems.

"What you hear from so many people is, why would we deal with other people's security and ignore American national security?" Mr. Lankford said, adding later, "We can do two things at once."