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## US State Department clears Ukraine security assistance funding. Is the Pentagon next?

By: **Aaron Mehta** ([/author/aaron-mehta](https://www.defensenews.com/author/aaron-mehta/)) 📅 September 12, 2019

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*Updated Sept. 12, 2019, at 10:55 a.m. ET with comments from the Senate.*

WASHINGTON — The U.S. State Department has cleared \$141.5 million in security assistance for Ukraine, including money for sniper rifles and grenade launchers — and another \$250 million (<https://www.defensenews.com/congress/2019/09/03/us-lawmakers-press-trump-to-release-aid-for-ukraine-to-fight-russia/>) from the Defense Department, controversially delayed by the Trump administration, appears set to move as well.

Speaking at a Defense Writers Group event Thursday, R. Clarke Cooper (<https://www.defensenews.com/smr/defense-news-conference/2019/09/04/us-ratchets-up-focus-on-incentivizing-arms-exports-to-allies/>), assistant secretary of state for political-military affairs, announced that Congress was notified late Wednesday about the funding. Those dollars can be used 15 days after the notification, should there be no objection from Capitol Hill.

“The Department of State has assessed further opportunities on foreign military financing and additional opportunities on the Countering Russian Aggression accounts,” Cooper said. “We also have support to the conventional weapons destruction and abatement and weapon storage. So there is a whole host of security assistance that we have outlined and identified for Ukraine.”

“I would anticipate there would be further notifications, but we were able to get all that paperwork done and pushed to Capitol Hill yesterday,” he added.

An hour later, during a Senate Appropriations Committee hearing, Sen. Lindsay Graham, R-S.C., indicated that the Defense Department’s funding for Ukraine may also move forward, saying Ukraine is “going to get the money.”

Sen. Dick Durbin, D-Ill., later claimed that the Trump administration moved the funds in part because the White House was embarrassed Congress was poised to act on the issue.

The \$250 million became a political flashpoint at the end of August, when reports emerged that the White House requested Defense Secretary Mark Esper and then-national security adviser John Bolton to review that security assistance package. The delay resulted in bipartisan criticism from Congress, where support for Ukraine remains strong (<https://www.defensenews.com/congress/2018/11/26/us-lawmakers-urge-trump-to-arm-ukraine-break-silence-on-russian-blockade/>).

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The situation expanded days later, when The Washington Post’s editorial board wrote that it was “reliably told” the Trump administration suspended the aid to pressure Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky to relaunch a corruption probe into former Vice President Joe Biden — the front-runner in the Democratic primary to challenge President Donald Trump — and his son. Reportedly, a prosecutor previously investigated Biden’s son, who had worked for a Ukrainian energy firm. As a result of the Post’s claim, House Democrats threatened to launch an investigation (<https://www.defensenews.com/congress/2019/09/09/house-democrats-probe-trump-slow-rolled-ukraine-military-aid-in-larger-effort-to-target-biden/>).

The latest approval for funding comes from fiscal 2018 foreign military financing and overseas contingency operations accounts (\$26.5 million) and from fiscal 2019 foreign military financing funds (\$115 million).

The projects break down like this:

- \$10 million to the Countering Russian Influence Fund, which helps provide “advisors, equipment, spare parts and training to build maritime domain awareness, secure communications, command and control, marksmanship, night vision disaster preparedness and special operations and territorial defense units.” Some money may also be used for cyber resiliency efforts.
- \$16.5 million in Europe and Eurasia regional funds, targeted to Black Sea maritime security efforts with a focus on “detecting, identifying and tracking Russian surface, subsurface and long-range aircraft combatants.” This may include funding for naval special warfare training.
- \$115 million in foreign military financing funding for FY19. Included in that funding are English language training, medical equipment, an improvised explosive device simulator and urban operations simulation equipment. Other areas of focus include naval and maritime capability support, refurbishment of equipment, airfield defense, night vision devices, radars, vehicles and tactical communication equipment. More specifically, funding “seeks to improve anti-armor, anti-personnel and counter-sniper capabilities against Russian-led separatists by modernizing Ukraine’s small arms weapons inventory with more precise and capable weapons, including sniper rifles and rocket-propelled grenade launchers.”

Cooper, for his part, said the number of different accounts for Ukraine, along with a recent visit from U.S. Vice President Mike Pence, is a sign of the Trump administration’s focus on the region.

“There is a whole host of security assistance that we have outlined and identified for Ukraine.,” he said.

Joe Gould in Washington contributed to this report.

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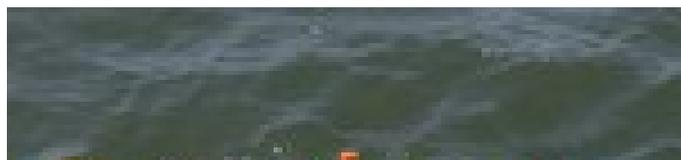
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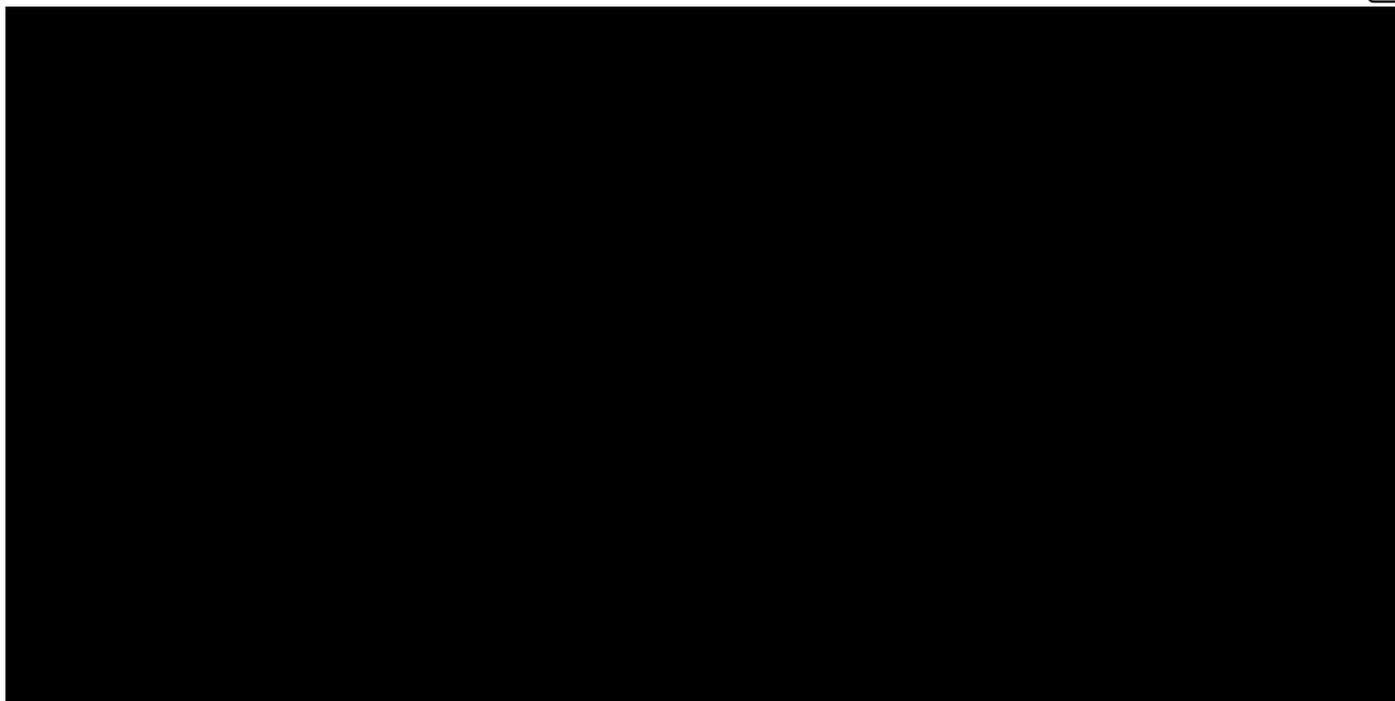
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