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House intel chair warns \$106B security package ‘difficult’ to pass in 2023

Голова Палати представників розвідки попереджає, що пакет заходів безпеки на суму 106 мільярдів доларів «важко» прийняти у 2023 році

Голова Комітету з розвідки Палати представників США Майк Тернер заявив, що нову американську допомогу Україні та Ізраїлю буде важко ухвалити до кінця 2023 р. Республіканці в Конгресі прагнуть пов'язати свою згоду на іноземну військову допомогу з жорсткішою прикордонною політикою. Водночас, як пише політичний репортер «New York Post» Джош Крістенсон, лідер більшості в Сенаті Чак Шумер планує провести голосування щодо мільярдної допомоги для України та Ізраїлю. За його словами, найближчими днями в Сенаті пройде закритий брифінг щодо питання України, у якому, як очікується, візьмуть участь усі члени верхньої палати американського законодавчого органа. Спікер Палати представників Майк Джонсон сказав, що існує відчуття невідкладності в отриманні допомоги як для Ізраїлю, так і для України. Він додав, що між членами Конгресу ведеться багато вдумливих переговорів.

<https://nypost.com/2023/11/27/news/house-intel-chair-warns-106b-security-spend-difficult-to-pass-in-2023/>

House Permanent Select Committee on Intelligence Chairman Mike Turner (R-Ohio) said Sunday that it will be “difficult” for Congress to pass President Biden’s \$106 billion spending request for aid to Ukraine, Israel, Taiwan and border security before the calendar turns to 2024.

“I think it’d be very difficult to get it done by the end of the year, and the impediment currently is the White House policy on the southern border,” Turner told NBC “Meet the Press” moderator Kristen Welker.

“The White House in this package, making — including it as a national security package, recognizing that the southern border is a threat, put in funding. But it’s going to need policy changes,” he said.

“Congress is going to require that there be laws changed to make certain that the border returns to its prior state, you know, perhaps ‘Remain in Mexico,’ other types of provisions that would secure the southern border.”

The Biden administration has abandoned border policies such as Title 42, a pandemic-era health rule that allowed for immediate expulsions, and the Migrant Protection Protocols — the official name for the “Remain in Mexico” policy, which required prospective arrivals to wait out their asylum claims south of the border.

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Homeland Security Secretary Alejandro Mayorkas has called for Congress to reform asylum policies, as Border Patrol officials testified earlier this year about the “unprecedented” and “demoralizing” wave of migrants flooding into the US.

Senate Majority Leader Chuck Schumer (D-NY) pledged in a “Dear Colleague” letter Sunday night to bring the comprehensive funding request up for a vote as soon as next week.

“One of the most important tasks we must finish is taking up and passing a funding bill to ensure we as well as our friends and partners in Ukraine, Israel, and the Indo-Pacific region have the necessary military capabilities to confront and deter our adversaries and competitors,” Schumer wrote.

U.S. Senate Majority Leader Chuck Schumer (D-NY) holds a press conference after the Senate passed a continuing resolution to avoid a shutdown of the federal government, in Washington, U.S., November 15, 2023.

“It’s also critical that we provide humanitarian assistance for innocent Palestinian civilians who have nothing to do with Hamas. These national security priorities are interrelated and demand bipartisan Congressional action.”

Biden’s supplemental aid request included \$61.4 billion for Ukraine, \$14.3 billion for Israel, \$13.6 billion for border security, \$7.4 billion for Taiwan and Indo-Pacific security assistance, as well as \$9 billion in humanitarian aid for Kyiv, the Jewish state and the Gaza Strip.

A separate \$100 million in humanitarian aid was unilaterally approved by Biden for the West Bank and Gaza — despite warnings from a government watchdog that those funds could fall into the hands of terror groups.

The House passed \$14.3 billion in security aid for Israel in a separate bill at the beginning of this month, but Schumer declined to bring the measure to the Senate floor despite a group of Senate Republicans advocating for separate Ukraine funding.

House Speaker Mike Johnson (R-La.) tried to “bifurcate” the military assistance to both war-torn nations shortly after winning the gavel in Oct. 25 while also supporting efforts to combine funding for the US border and Ukraine.

“Ukraine is another priority, of course. We can’t allow [Russian President] Vladimir Putin to march through Europe,” Johnson said Monday at a press conference in Sarasota, Fla, adding that he was “confident and optimistic” that funding for Kyiv, Israel and the US southern border would pass in Congress.

“What we’ve said is if there’s to be additional assistance to Ukraine, which most members of Congress believe is important, we have to also work and change in our own border policy. And so there’s been a lot of thoughtful negotiation, ongoing, with that. I think most of our Senate colleagues recognize that those two things need to move together.”

Israeli soldiers stand next to their belongings as they pray near the Israel-Gaza border on its Israeli side during a temporary truce between Hamas and Israel, in southern Israel, November 26, 2023.

In an interview with The Post Nov. 9, Johnson affirmed his commitment to passing funding for Ukraine with appropriate safeguards, adding that it would be “pure poetry” to pay for the aid with more than \$300 billion in seized Russian assets.

He also laid responsibility for the border crisis at the feet of Mayorkas, saying immigration policies could be changed “overnight” but the Biden administration is “unwilling to do it.”

Senate Minority Leader Mitch McConnell (R-Ky.) has backed Johnson, warning Biden and congressional Democrats that it “will be difficult to get the package across the floor in the Senate without a credible border solution.”

But Schumer dismissed the effort as having “injected a decades old, hyper-partisan issue into overwhelmingly bipartisan priorities” in his Sunday letter.

“Democrats stand ready to work on common-sense solutions to address immigration, but purely partisan hard-right demands, like those in H.R. 2, jeopardize the entire national security supplemental package,” he said, referencing House Republicans’ border security bill that passed in May.

Conservative US faith leaders and groups on Monday sent a letter to Schumer demanding that he “advance legislation to help fund Israel’s defenses as soon as possible,” according to a copy of the missive obtained by Politico.

On Sunday, Biden, 81, celebrated the release of 17 hostages held by Hamas in Gaza — including a 4-year-old American girl whose parents were killed during the terror group’s Oct. 7 attack.

Turner said Biden deserved credit but should have made it “a condition of this deal that Americans be in the first hostages that are released.”

On Monday, Qatar’s foreign minister announced an agreement had been struck to extend the pause in fighting for another two days, presumably to allow the release of more hostages. Turner told Welker Sunday that Biden deserved some credit for securing a halt to the bloodshed, but added that the president should have made it “a condition of this deal that Americans be in the first hostages that are released, especially since American aid is going into Gaza right now.”

“You know, our expectation is there are 10 Americans that are being held out of the 240 hostages,” he said. “For them to be so quick to claim credit for a deal that we don’t know what’s going to come out of this, I just think it’s very dangerous.”