

The Sydney Morning Herald. – 20.02.2023

Rob Harris

‘Ukraine stands, democracy stands’: Biden makes surprise visit to Ukraine

«Україна стоїть, демократія стоїть»: Д. Байден здійснив несподіваний візит до України

Президент США Д. Байден здійснив несподіваний візит до Києва, щоб зустрітися з Президентом В. Зеленським, демонструючи прихильність США напередодні першої річниці повномасштабного вторгнення росії в Україну. Ця поїздка була оповита таємницею через занепокоєння безпекою та відбулася в ключовий момент війни, коли росія посилює атаки та готується до ймовірного більш масштабного наступу. Д. Байден оголосив про виділення 500 млн дол. додаткової допомоги у сфері безпеки, включаючи артилерійські боєприпаси, додаткові ракети Javelin і гаубиці. Але пакет, здається, не включав нові можливості, такі як винищувачі чи ракети більшої дальності, яких Київ давно шукав. Після повномасштабного вторгнення росії в Україну США оголосили про виділення близько 30 млрд дол. допомоги.

<https://www.smh.com.au/world/europe/us-president-makes-surprise-visit-to-ukraine-20230220-p5cm2r.html>

US President Joe Biden has made a surprise visit to Kyiv to meet President Volodymyr Zelensky in a strong showing of American commitment ahead of the first anniversary of Russia’s full-scale invasion of Ukraine.

The trip was shrouded in secrecy because of security concerns and comes at a pivotal moment in the war as Russia increases attacks and prepares for a likely larger offensive in the coming weeks. US President Joe Biden has visited Kyiv in Ukraine, just days before the first anniversary of the Russian invasion.

Biden had already been publicly scheduled to arrive in Warsaw on Tuesday morning for meetings with Polish President Andrzej Duda as well as the leaders of the so-called Bucharest Nine group of eastern European countries.

In joint remarks with Zelensky in Mariinsky Palace, Biden spoke about the resilience of the Ukrainian resistance as the war entered its second year, noting how the international community initially feared Kyiv would fall in the face of Russia’s invasion.

“One year later, Kyiv stands. And Ukraine stands. Democracy stands,” Biden said.

“I thought it was critical that there not be any doubt, none whatsoever, about US support for Ukraine in the war. I’m here to show our unwavering support for the nation’s independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity.”

Biden’s arrival in the Ukrainian capital comes a day before Russian President Vladimir Putin is due to make a major address, which is expected to set out Russia’s aims for the second year of the invasion he launched on February 25 last year.

Biden departed Washington without notice after he and his wife had a rare dinner out at a restaurant on Saturday night. The New York Times reported that Biden made the secret visit after a 10-hour train journey from the Polish border.

Officials had repeatedly denied that there were any other plans they could announce about a trip to Ukraine while he was there. But they revealed on Monday that the trip followed months of meticulous planning by a small group of officials from the White House, Pentagon, Secret Service and intelligence community.

Washington notified Moscow of Biden’s trip a few hours beforehand to avoid “miscalculations” that could provoke war between the two nuclear powers, the White House said.

Biden announced \$US500 million (\$723 million) in additional security assistance, including artillery ammunition, more javelin missiles and howitzers. But the package did not appear to include new capabilities such as fighter jets or longer-range missiles Kyiv has long sought. The

US has announced about \$US30 billion in lethal assistance since Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine.

In a statement issued by the White House, Biden said: "As the world prepares to mark the one-year anniversary of Russia's brutal invasion of Ukraine, I am in Kyiv today to meet with President Zelensky and reaffirm our unwavering and unflagging commitment to Ukraine's democracy, sovereignty, and territorial integrity.

"When Putin launched his invasion nearly one year ago, he thought Ukraine was weak and the West was divided. He thought he could outlast us. But he was dead wrong."

Videos on social media showed Biden walking with Zelensky in Kyiv's St Michael's Square as air raid sirens blared in the background and sounded throughout much of the country. With the backdrop of the gold-domed St Michael's Cathedral, Biden laid a wreath at a memorial to fallen Ukrainian soldiers in the centre of the square.

Zelensky said Biden's visit was an "extremely important sign of support for all Ukrainians".

"The first phone call supporting Ukraine came from the White House. Thank you for your leadership. I also thank you for the bipartisan support, for the support of the Congress," he said.

Zelensky said that he would talk to the Biden about the situation on the frontline and about the ordeals being faced by the Ukrainian people.

"What we have to do to stop the war, to succeed in this war, to make Ukraine even stronger, and how to gain victory this year," he said.

Biden had been under pressure to visit Kyiv from Republicans, Democrats and foreign counterparts following a string of trip from European leaders including French President Emmanuel Macron, German Chancellor Olaf Scholz, Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau and British Prime Ministers Boris Johnson and Rishi Sunak. First lady Jill Biden made a surprise visit to a small town in western Ukraine last year while US Secretary of State Antony Blinken made the trip in September and Jake Sullivan, the president's national security adviser, visited in November.

Biden said he was glad to visit Kyiv again.

"Much has changed since my last trip," he said. "Terrible things have happened, an invasion, but at the same time, the Ukrainian people have stepped up in a way that very few people have ever had in their defence. And they helped us embrace the notion of democracy."