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# BIDEN MEETS WITH CONGRESSIONAL LEADERS OVER NATIONAL SECURITY FUNDING AND SEEKS PATH FORWARD ON UKRAINE

by Rafaela Jinich | Jan 18, 2024 | Featured, National Security



**HOUSE SPEAKER MIKE JOHNSON (R-LA.) ADDRESSING THE PRESS AFTER THE MEETING WITH PRESIDENT JOE BIDEN ON JAN 17, 2024. (RAFAELA JINICH/MNS)**

WASHINGTON — President Joe Biden convened key congressional leaders at the White House on Wednesday to catalyze support for the stalled \$110 billion aid package for Ukraine, Israel, and other crucial U.S. allies.

Minutes before the meeting, National Security spokesperson John Kirby said that this opportunity will allow members of Congress to fully understand Ukraine's desperate need for weapons and capabilities. The President along with the national security team

stressed the need to send a security assistance package, which cannot be sent unless they get some funding.

“It’s not as if the war stopped because our aid stopped,” said Kirby. “Ukrainians continue to get attacked.”

In the meeting, President Biden emphasized the urgency for Congress to approve funding for Ukraine’s air defense capabilities, crucial for its safeguarding against Russia’s invasion. After the meeting, the White House statement highlighted the imperativeness of this action, noting that approval would “send a strong signal of U.S. resolve.”

“Congress, don’t delay. Pass my national security supplemental. The time to act is now,” the president [wrote](#) in a social media post after the meeting.

Speaker Mike Johnson (R-La.) seized the opportunity to urge President Biden to implement more robust border security measures. The speaker conveyed the House GOP’s demand for “substantive policy change,” emphasizing concerns that the White House’s executive actions on immigration had compromised border strength before focusing on issues outside the U.S.

“We understand that there’s concern about the safety, security, sovereignty of Ukraine, but the American people have those same concerns about our own domestic sovereignty and our own safety and security,” said Johnson when he addressed the press after the meeting.

Johnson insisted that the border crisis must be dealt with first.

“We understand that all these things are important, but we must insist, we must insist that the border be the top priority,” the speaker said. “I think we have some consensus around that table.”

The meeting also included Senate Majority Leader Chuck Schumer (D-N.Y.), Senate Minority Leader Mitch McConnell (R-Ky.), House Minority Leader Hakeem Jeffries (D-N.Y.) and several other lawmakers.

A bipartisan consensus emerged on the urgency of supporting Ukraine while simultaneously addressing border security. Schumer reiterated that the meeting indicated a consensus between Democrats and Republicans on the need for additional aid to Ukraine and enhanced U.S. border security.

“I am more optimistic than ever before that we come to an agreement,” Schumer said. “I put the chances a little bit greater than half.”


The White House statement stressed that failure to act would endanger the U.S. national security, the NATO Alliance and the rest of the world.

“It is urgently necessary that we continue to support the Ukrainian effort for the good of the free world,” said Jeffries. “For the good of democracy and for the good of America’s national security interests.”

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  8 

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