

US pledges more military aid

Patriot missiles arrive; Congress hears reports of Russian war crimes

ADAM PEMBLE, LOLITA C. BALDOR AND KEVIN FREKING Associated Press Apr 20, 2023 0



Ukraine's ambassador Oksana Markarova, right, hugs a Ukrainian victim of Russia's war with Ukraine before her testimony Wednesday during a house Foreign affairs Committee hearing on Capitol hill in Washington. JACQUELYN MARTIN, ASSOCIATED PRESS



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WAR IN UKRAINE

KYIV, Ukraine — American-made Patriot missiles have arrived in Ukraine, the country's defense minister said Wednesday, providing Kyiv with a long-sought new shield against the Russian airstrikes that have devastated cities and civilian infrastructure.

"Today, our beautiful Ukrainian sky becomes more secure," Defense Minister Oleksii (((Reznikov))) said in a tweet. He thanked the United States, Germany and the Netherlands, without saying how many missile systems were delivered or when they arrived.

The U.S. will send Ukraine about \$325 million in additional military aid, including an enormous amount of artillery rounds and ammunition, the Pentagon said Wednesday. It will all be pulled from Pentagon stocks, so it can go quickly to the front lines.

Russia's invading forces are deliberately using rape, torture and kidnapping to try and sow terror among civilians in Ukraine, the top prosecutor in Ukraine told U.S. lawmakers Wednesday.

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Prosecutor General Andriy Kostin said nearly 80,000 cases of war crimes were registered in Ukraine since the war began in February 2022.

He said when the Ukrainian military liberated Kherson last November, it found some 20 torture chambers and more than 1,000 survivors reported a range of abuses, including the use of electric shocks, waterboarding, being forced to strip naked and threats of mutilation and death.

Kostin said more than 60 cases of rape were documented in the Kherson region alone. In areas still controlled by Russian forces, residents, including children, are being forcefully relocated to other occupied territories or to Russia.

The House Foreign Affairs Committee invited Kostin to testify. The chairman, Rep. Michael McCaul, R-Texas, believes spotlighting the brutality of Russia's actions will show lawmakers and voters why the United States is in the right in supporting Ukraine.

The panel also heard from a war crimes survivor: a 57-year-old woman whose identity was not revealed out of concerns about retribution. She said she was taken to a torture chamber for five days, beaten, forced to strip and endured threats of rape and murder. At one point, she was forced to dig her own grave. "These terrible crimes need to be stopped," she told lawmakers.

"This is happening right now. They are monsters and they need to be brought to justice," McCaul said. He added: "These are more than war crimes. These are more than crimes against humanity. What we are witnessing in Ukraine is genocide."

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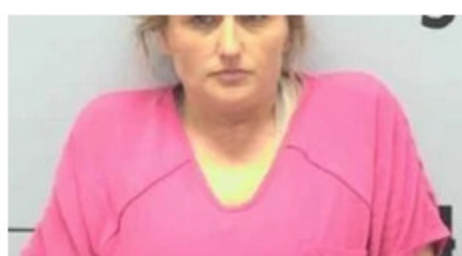
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