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As Blinken Visits Kyiv to Show Support, Russia Makes a Deadly Attack

A Russian missile killed at least 17 civilians and wounded dozens, while Secretary of State Antony J. Blinken vowed lasting backing and announced a new round of aid.

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The scene of a missile strike where at least 17 people were killed and 32 wounded at a busy market on Wednesday in Kostyantynivka, Ukraine. Lynsey Addario for The New York Times

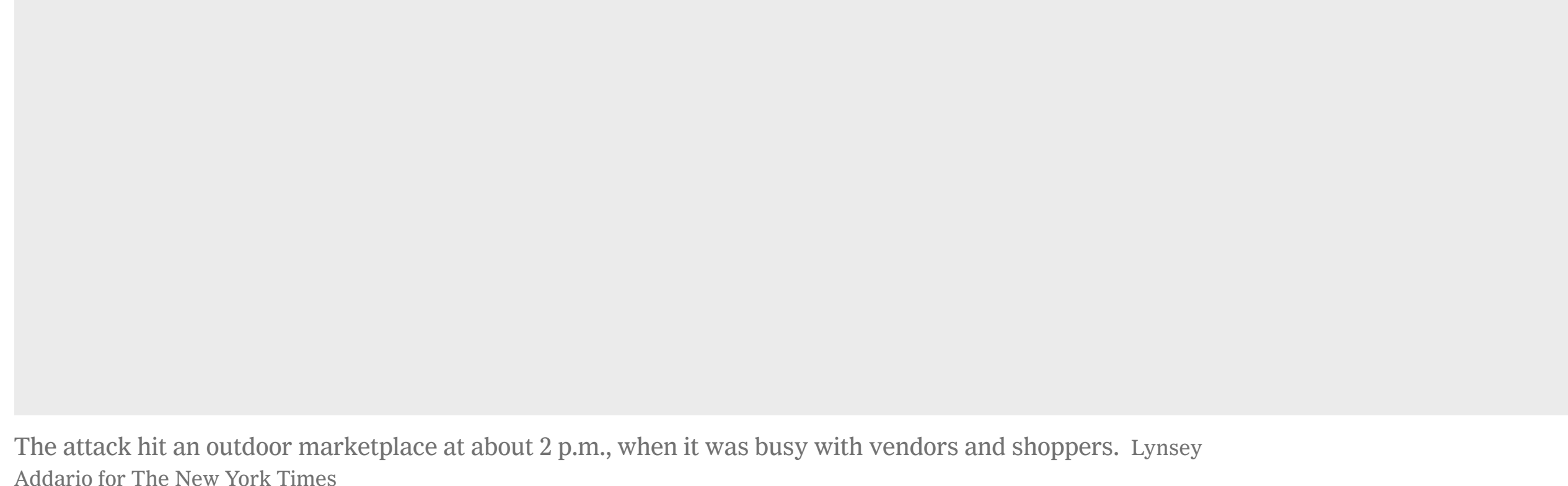
By Andrew E. Kramer and Constant Méheut
Andrew E. Kramer reported from Kyiv, Ukraine, and Constant Méheut from London

Sept. 6, 2023, 6:05 p.m. ET

Secretary of State Antony J. Blinken traveled to Ukraine's capital on Wednesday and met with President Volodymyr Zelensky, delivering a U.S. vote of confidence — and the promise of more aid — even as Russia made one of the deadliest attacks of the war on civilians.

A Russian missile struck Kostyantynivka, an eastern city near the front lines, killing at least 17 people and wounding at least 32 others, and more might still be trapped in the rubble, according to Ukrainian officials. They said the attack hit an outdoor marketplace at about 2 p.m., when it was busy with vendors and shoppers, while Mr. Blinken was in Kyiv.

“A regular market. Shops. A pharmacy. People who did nothing wrong. Many wounded. Unfortunately, the number of casualties and the injured may rise,” Mr. Zelensky [wrote on Telegram](#). For anyone around the world to continue to deal with Russia, he added, “means turning a blind eye to” atrocities.



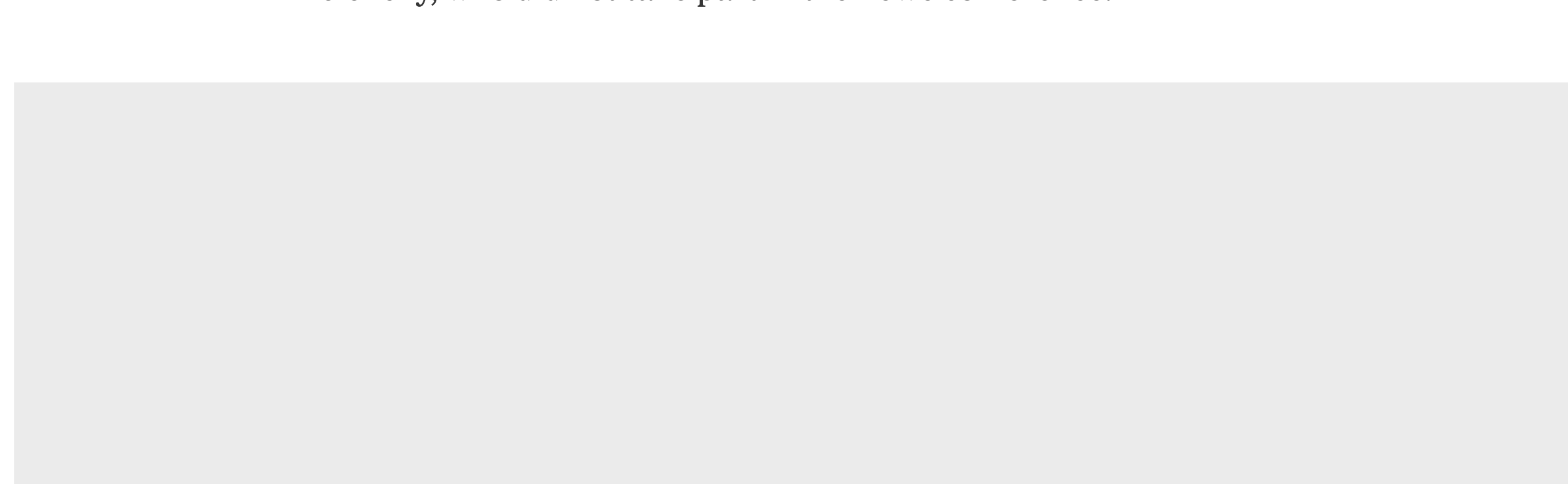
The attack hit an outdoor marketplace at about 2 p.m., when it was busy with vendors and shoppers. Lynsey Addario for The New York Times

Early in the morning, [Russia launched a volley of missiles and drones](#), several of them at Kyiv, hours before Mr. Blinken arrived, the Ukrainian military said, including a drone that killed at least one person in Izmil, a small port city on the Danube River in southern Ukraine.

Mr. Blinken's trip, which was not announced in advance for security reasons, came as Mr. Zelensky's government wages an increasingly public fight against the official corruption that has long been endemic in his country.

Some lawmakers in the United States and Europe have cited that problem — as well as the grueling pace of Kyiv's counteroffensive to retake Russian-occupied territory — in voicing doubts about continuing to spend billions to arm and support Ukraine. That has put pressure on Mr. Zelensky and the Biden administration to show progress against graft.

“We're engaged in assisting the government of Ukraine on anticorruption efforts and on efforts to ensure accountability and full transparency of all the assistance we're providing, as well as the security of U.S.-provided defense articles and technologies,” Mr. Blinken said at a news conference after his meeting with Mr. Zelensky, who did not take part in the news conference.

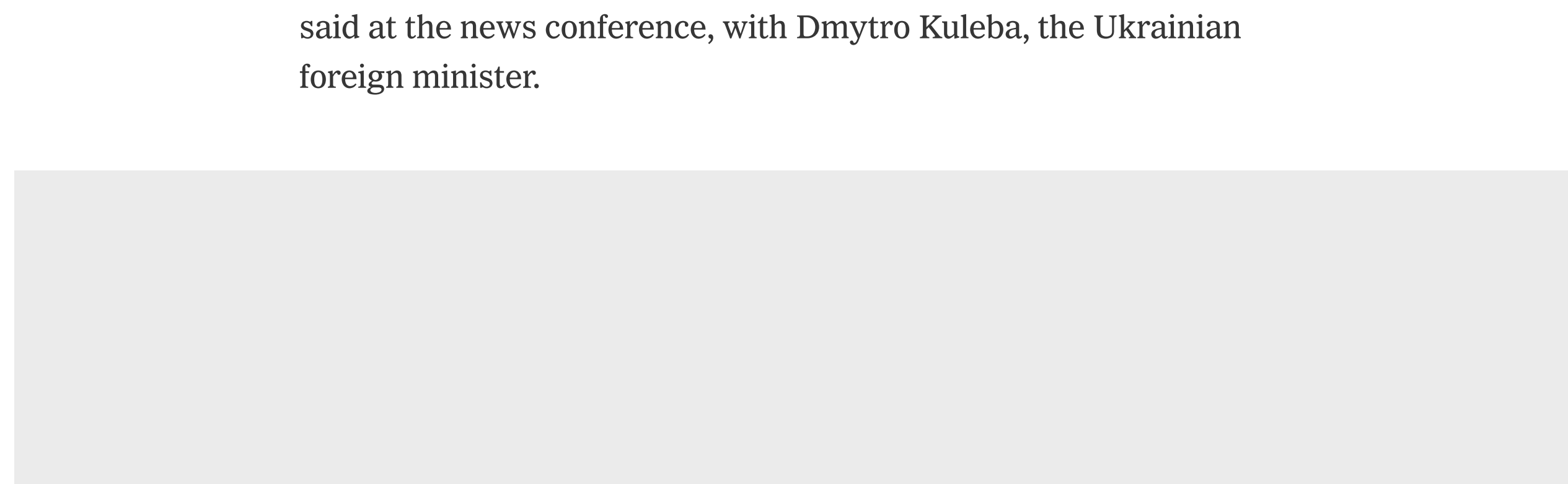


President Volodymyr Zelensky greeting Secretary of State Antony J. Blinken before a meeting in Kyiv on Wednesday. Pool photo by Brendan Smialowski

“President Zelensky and I discussed these issues today, and the importance to Ukraine's democratic future of continued reforms and the fight against corruption,” he said.

[After a series of military procurement and enlistment scandals](#), this week Mr. Zelensky [dismissed his defense minister](#), Oleksii Reznikov, the biggest shake-up in his administration during a year and a half of war. The Ukrainian Parliament on Wednesday confirmed the appointment of his replacement, Rustem Umerov.

Mr. Blinken, making his fourth trip to Kyiv since the invasion, stated repeatedly that American backing was unshaken. “Ukraine's security is integral to the security of the entire Euro-Atlantic community and indeed it's integral to security around the world, because of the principles that are being challenged here,” he said at the news conference, with Dmytro Kuleba, the Ukrainian foreign minister.



Damage after the missile strike in Kostyantynivka. Lynsey Addario for The New York Times

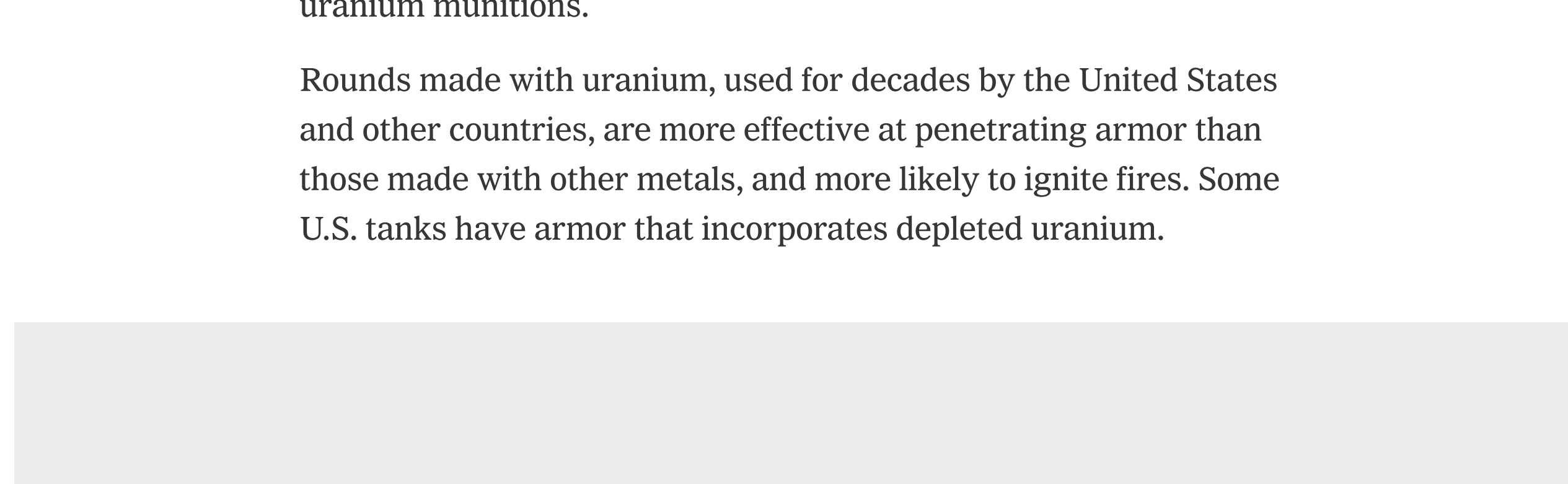
He announced more than \$1 billion in new aid, including \$665.5 million in military and other security assistance, drawing on spending authority already granted by Congress to the Biden administration. He noted that much of the aid was intended not for the current fight but for long-term security and rebuilding Ukrainian society.

“For the first time we are transferring to Ukraine assets seized from sanctioned Russian oligarchs, which will now be used to support Ukrainian military veterans,” he said. “Those who have enabled Putin's war of aggression should pay for it.”

In all, the United States has supplied [\\$43 billion](#) in equipment, including weaponry, training and other military and law enforcement aid, since Russia's full-scale invasion began in February 2022, and more than \$20 billion in economic and humanitarian aid. President Biden has asked Congress to authorize an additional \$24 billion.

The Defense Department said on Wednesday that the administration plans to send ammunition made with [depleted uranium](#) to Ukraine — the latest in a series of escalations in what kinds of weaponry the United States would give to Kyiv. The British government [said in March](#) that it would supply Ukraine depleted uranium munitions.

Rounds made with uranium, used for decades by the United States and other countries, are more effective at penetrating armor than those made with other metals, and more likely to ignite fires. Some U.S. tanks have armor that incorporates depleted uranium.

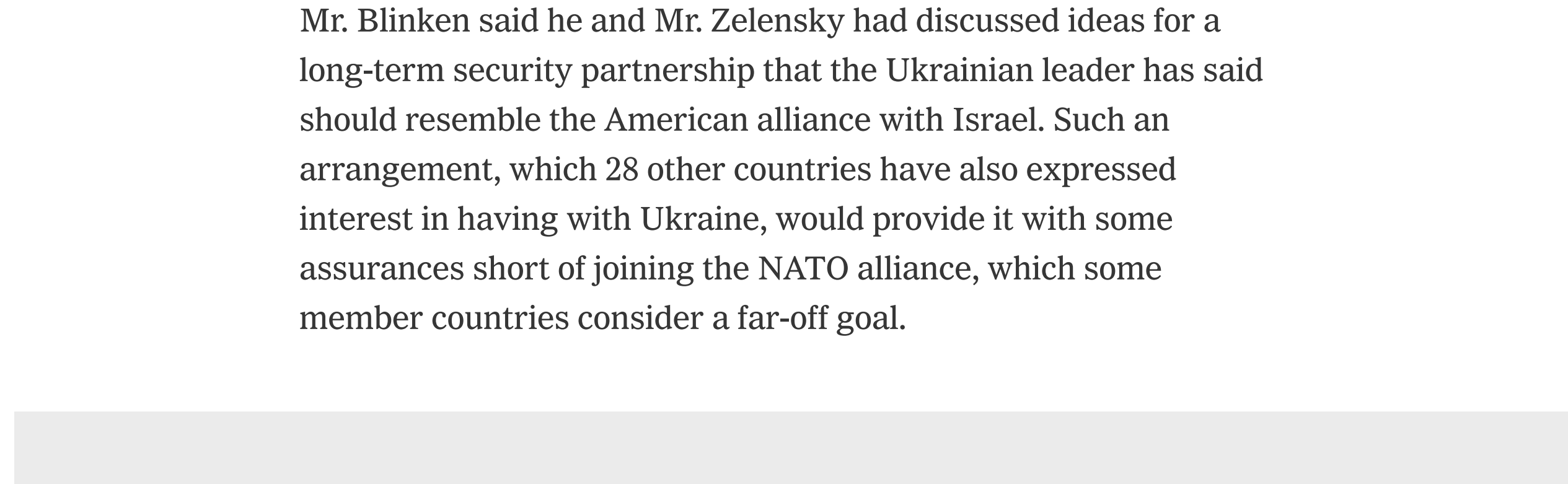


Debris after the missile strike in Kostyantynivka. Lynsey Addario for The New York Times

The metal, a byproduct of making fuel for nuclear reactors, is mildly radioactive. Some advocates have expressed concerns that prolonged exposure could cause illness, or that spent ammunition could cause environmental contamination, but the Pentagon says those fears are unfounded.

The Biden administration has repeatedly resisted and then rocketed on sending Patriot weapons systems to Ukraine — HIMARS rocket artillery, Patriot air defense missiles, Abrams tank, F-16 fighter jets and cluster munitions, among others.

Mr. Blinken said he and Mr. Zelensky had discussed ideas for a long-term security partnership that the Ukrainian leader has said should resemble the American alliance with Israel. Such an arrangement, which 28 other countries have also expressed interest in having with Ukraine, would provide it with some assurances short of joining the NATO alliance, which some member countries consider a far-off goal.



A woman watching as Ukrainian security forces investigated at the scene of the strike. “I passed by here ten minutes before,” she said. “My husband's friend and her husband were both killed.” Lynsey Addario for The New York Times

Reporting was contributed by Erin Mendell from Seoul and Marc Santora from Odesa, Ukraine.

Andrew E. Kramer is the Times bureau chief in Kyiv. He was part of a team that won the 2017 Pulitzer Prize in International Reporting for [a series](#) on Russia's covert projection of power. [More about Andrew E. Kramer](#)

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