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U.S. Pledges Millions More in Aid to Ukraine, Moldova, Georgia

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The United States pledged millions of dollars in additional aid to Ukraine, Moldova and Georgia on Saturday, deepening American support to the Western-leaning countries on Russia's border.

Vice President Joe Biden announced the extra aid, which must be approved by Congress, during a visit to Kiev for the inauguration of Ukrainian President Petro Poroshenko.

Washington pledged $48 million to Ukraine, $8 million to Moldova and $5 million to Georgia after Biden met the presidents of the three countries.

Russia's annexation of the Crimea region from Ukraine in March, after weeks of protests ousted Poroshenko's pro-Moscow predecessor Victor Yanukovich, has provoked the most serious crisis in relations with the West since the end of the Cold War.

As with Ukraine, there are sharp tensions between Moscow and Moldova and Georgia, where regions have formed breakaway states in reaction to ethnic nationalist regimes, aligning

themselves with Russia: Transdnestr in the case of Moldova, and Abkhazia and South Ossetia in the case of Georgia.

The additional Ukraine aid follows Poroshenko's meeting with U.S. President Barack Obama on Wednesday in Warsaw and will go toward economic reforms, the White House said in a statement.

In Moldova, the U.S. aid will target programs to democratic institutions and the economy as the country implements a trade pact reached with the European Union last summer, it said. The new aid is in addition to the $2.7 million announced in March.

The collapse of a proposed trade agreement with the European Union has been at the heart of Ukraine's political crisis over the past six months as Russia and western countries compete to assert dominance in the region.

The proposed aid packages follow a U.S. announcement Tuesday that it would help build the defense capacity of Ukraine, Moldova and Georgia, all on Russia's western border.

The new aid also will support better ties between Moldova and Russian-speaking Transdnestr, the White House said.

Similarly, it said the $5 million to Georgia will help people living along the border with Russia and "increase access to objective information by populations in the occupied territories of Abkhazia and South Ossetia."

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