



Australian Government

Defence

**Senate Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade
References Committee**

Inquiry into Australian Support for Ukraine

**Department of Defence
Submission**

May 2024

Introduction

1. Australia is committed to supporting Ukraine's defence of its sovereignty and territory in the face of Russia's illegal and immoral invasion. Australia's objective, along with its partners, is two-fold: to support Ukraine and to impose costs on Russia for its aggression. In doing so, Australia demonstrates its commitment to upholding the rules-based international order.

Coordination and decision-making processes

2. Defence works closely with partner agencies to support a coordinated response to Russia's invasion of Ukraine. This includes the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT) and the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet. Defence has been a vital part of whole-of-government processes to canvass and coordinate advice and options for Government in response to Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine, including support for the Ukraine Government and efforts to hold Russia accountable.
3. Defence also coordinates closely with international partners, including Ukraine, on a bilateral and multinational basis. One such example is the United States (US)-led Ukraine Defense Contact Group (UDCG) which brings Ukraine together with partners to coordinate support. A number of 'Capability Coalitions' have been established under the UDCG to coordinate support along specific capability lines of effort. In March 2024 the Deputy Prime Minister announced Australia would join the Latvia and United Kingdom (UK)-led Drone Capability Coalition under the UDCG. Through this coalition, Australia will coordinate with partners on supporting Ukraine's uncrewed systems capabilities.
4. Defence acknowledges there is significant, sustained community interest and support for Ukraine. There is also strong interest in the type and extent of assistance Australia provides. This has included calls for additional support, including particular platforms and systems. Defence carefully assesses potential assistance against Ukraine's needs and capabilities, and against potential impacts on ADF capability. Defence's support is coordinated among a number of areas of the Defence organisation, including but not limited to International Policy Division, Military Strategic Commitments, Joint Operations Command, the Services, and Capability Acquisition and Sustainment Group.
5. The Australian National Audit Office (ANAO) undertook an independent performance audit, *Australia's Provision of Military Assistance to Ukraine*, presented to Parliament on 29 June 2023.
6. The ANAO report underscored the extensive efforts Defence undertook to ensure meaningful assistance to Ukraine was delivered promptly to best support Ukraine in defending itself. The report noted that Defence moved quickly to identify appropriate options for providing military assistance to the Government of Ukraine for the Australian Government's consideration, and engaged effectively with relevant stakeholders in Australia and internationally.
7. The report did not make any recommendations. Two opportunities for improvement were identified relating to Defence:

- a. resolve, in consultation with the Department of Finance and DFAT, issues identified in its administration of financial assistance grants provided by the Australian Government to assist the Government of Ukraine; and
 - b. review or evaluate its arrangements for the delivery of military assistance to the Government of Ukraine, to inform its approach to and implementation of any further assistance initiatives.
8. Defence welcomed the ANAO's constructive engagement, and has implemented the suggested opportunities for improvement by:
 - a. seeking and receiving a delegation from the Minister for Finance to the Secretary of Defence to enable the gifting of Defence property in support of Ukraine;
 - b. establishing an internal consultation process, chaired at the senior executive level, to coordinate current and future Defence support for Ukraine; and
 - c. establishing a dedicated coordination unit within International Policy Division to provide a focal point for Defence on Ukraine, and to work with stakeholders on supporting the provision of credible, practical military assistance to Ukraine.
9. Defence has sought to refine its decision-making processes to enable a more proactive approach to identifying options, including to enhance engagement with international partners and Ukraine itself. Defence is also better positioned to reviewing requests from the Government of Ukraine in a timely and constructive manner.

Defence support for Ukraine

10. Support provided by the Department of Defence has taken two principal forms:
 - a. an ADF operation, known as Operation KUDU, comprising two elements: training Ukrainian Armed Forces personnel in the United Kingdom (UK), and the deployment of a Royal Australian Air Force (RAAF) E-7A Wedgetail early warning and control aircraft to Europe from October 2023 to March 2024; and
 - b. materiel and financial contributions, including equipment from ADF stocks, equipment purchased from Australian defence industry and contributing funds through international partners.
11. Additionally, since March 2022, a Support and Response Team (SRT) has been based in Europe supporting the delivery of Australian military assistance. The SRT-E works with international partners, including the International Donor Coordination Center.
12. Defence support for Ukraine is carefully balanced against other priorities, noting Defence's primary focus on Australia's security in a more contested Indo-Pacific region and the focus on the Australian Defence Force's (ADF's) preparedness, modernisation and force generation as set out in the National Defence Strategy.

Operation KUDU

13. Operation KUDU is the overarching ADF operation in support of Ukraine, encompassing both the training of Ukrainian Armed Forces personnel by ADF personnel and the six-month deployment of an early warning and control aircraft to Europe.
14. Since January 2023, the ADF has deployed six rotations of 70-90 personnel to the UK to deliver training to the Ukrainian Armed Forces. To date, 391 ADF personnel have

deployed as part of this activity. The training delivered under KUDU helps increase survivability and lethality of Ukrainian frontline personnel. Training has focused on basic infantry tactics for urban and wooded environments.

15. On 14 December 2023 the Deputy Prime Minister announced an extension of Australia's commitment to the training program through to the end of 2024. The training has been expanded through the inclusion of a junior leadership program, at the request of Ukraine and the UK. Section commander, platoon commander, and platoon and company sergeant battle courses have been delivered with a focus on foundation warfighting skills including urban and trench warfare, combat first aid, explosive hazard awareness and marksmanship. This expansion has brought the number of ADF personnel deployed on each rotation to approximately 90, an increase of 20 from 2023.
16. Over 1,800 Ukrainian recruits have graduated from ADF-delivered training. This operation is part of a multinational program under the UK-led Operation INTERFLEX, which has seen more than 30,000 Ukrainian soldiers trained since June 2022.
17. In response to a request from the US, Australia deployed a RAAF E-7A Wedgetail aircraft to Germany for six months. Deployed from October 2023 to March 2024, the aircraft integrated with Australia's partners, including the US and the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), to provide early warning of threats against a gateway that is a vital supply line for humanitarian and military assistance to Ukraine.
18. The aircraft operated from Ramstein Air Base, Germany. Up to 100 ADF personnel were deployed with the aircraft, comprising aircrew, maintenance, medical, logistics, and operational and administrative support personnel. ADF personnel or assets did not enter Ukraine throughout the deployment.

Materiel and financial contributions

19. Defence materiel and financial contributions to international funds make up the most significant form of support provided to Ukraine. Through Defence, to date, Australia has announced the commitment of \$880 million worth of support in this form. This includes a \$50 million commitment to the UK Ministry of Defence-administered International Fund for Ukraine for the procurement of priority military equipment for Ukraine, and \$100 million worth of assistance announced during the Deputy Prime Minister's 27 April 2024 visit to Ukraine.
20. The Government has gifted a range of equipment from ADF stock, including:
 - a. 120 Bushmaster protected mobility vehicles;
 - b. six M777 155mm lightweight towed howitzers plus ammunition;
 - c. 56 M113AS4 armoured vehicles and 14 special operations vehicles;
 - d. 28 MAN 40M medium trucks and 14 trailers;
 - e. de-mining equipment to help remove explosive ordnance littering the battlefield;
 - f. anti-armour weapons and other weapons;
 - g. technology from Australian suppliers, including unmanned aerial systems, decoys and remote vehicles;
 - h. 105mm and 155mm artillery ammunition; and

- i. air-to-ground precision munitions.
- 21. Recognising the importance of air defence to support Ukraine to counter Russia's relentless attacks on its front lines, population centres, and critical infrastructure, Australia will transfer short-range air defence capabilities to Ukraine.
- 22. Defence has assisted Australian defence industry to provide equipment to Ukraine through support for commercial arrangements, as well as directly procuring \$102 million worth of equipment from industry, and providing 155mm artillery ammunition to Ukraine through a partnership with France.
- 23. Defence acted quickly following Russia's full-scale invasion and has provided sustained and ongoing support with new packages announced by the Government. Defence continues to assess potential options for future support, balanced against other priorities.