



National Audit Office



REPORT

Investigation into military support for Ukraine

Ministry of Defence

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Key facts

£7.8bn

total UK funding committed to military support for Ukraine, between January 2022 and March 2025

**over
3,000**

deliveries of military supplies to the Armed Forces of Ukraine by road and sea, between spring 2022 and summer 2024

42,050

Ukrainian armed forces personnel trained under the UK's 'Operation Interflex', by the end of July 2024

676	Royal Air Force flights delivering equipment to the Armed Forces of Ukraine, February 2022 to mid-July 2024
233	Ministry of Defence (MoD) staff in 'Operation Scorpius', providing support to Ukraine
£2.7 billion	MoD's estimate of the cost of replacing equipment donated to Ukraine from UK stockpiles in the first two years of the conflict, to be replaced over a nine-year period, 2022-23 to 2030-31
£2.4 billion	amount MoD has spent on procuring equipment for Ukraine (in addition to donating equipment from UK stockpiles), between April 2022 and March 2024
715	contracts placed by MoD for equipment, to June 2024
£1.3 billion	value of single-source equipment contracts which the MoD has exempted from enhanced scrutiny requirements
Eight times	the rate at which British Army bids to use UK training sites in 2023 were rejected, compared to the rate in a normal year, as a result of Operation Interflex

What this investigation is about

1 On 24 February 2022 Russia invaded Ukraine, beginning a war which continues at the date of this report's publication. In an address to the nation on the day of the invasion, the then Prime Minister stated that the Russian attack was "without any provocation and without any credible excuse" and that the UK would work with allies "to ensure that the sovereignty and independence of Ukraine is restored".

2 The Ministry of Defence (MoD) has led the UK government's support for the Armed Forces of Ukraine (AFU), providing military equipment and training in coordination with other countries, in line with Ukraine's requests for support. The UK has committed £7.8 billion to military support for Ukraine, between January 2022 and March 2025. The equipment provided includes air defence missiles, drones, cruise missiles, tanks and ships, as well as clothing and personal equipment. UK forces have trained at least 42,050 AFU personnel, including new recruits, frontline commanders, instructors and those in specialist roles such as medical staff.

3 The UK government remains committed to supporting Ukraine. In January 2024 the previous Prime Minister and President Zelenskyy signed a 10-year agreement, committing the UK to supporting Ukraine "for as long as it needs, so that Ukraine can effectively defend itself".¹ The current government reaffirmed that commitment in July 2024.² Spending on Ukraine has driven a marked rise in the MoD's overall spending on operations (warfighting and peacekeeping). In 2022-23 the MoD spent £2.9 billion on operations, its highest level of operational spending since 2011-12, when UK deployment in Afghanistan was near its peak.

4 This investigation was prepared in response to public and parliamentary interest in the MoD's support for Ukraine and the cost of providing this support. In it we set out the MoD's approach to supporting the AFU and how it has developed as the war has continued, focusing on the extent and nature of the MoD's military equipment supplies and the training provided to the AFU, and the financial implications. The report covers:

- an overview of the UK's military support for Ukraine (Part One);
- supplying Ukraine with military equipment (Part Two); and
- training Ukrainian personnel (Part Three).

5 This investigation does not seek to assess the strategic case for supporting Ukraine, or to evaluate the value for money or effectiveness of the equipment and training provided. Information on some aspects of the MoD's support for Ukraine is classified for reasons of national security and is not included in this report.

¹ Prime Minister's Office, *Agreement on Security Co-operation Between the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland and Ukraine*, 12 January 2024 (accessed 26 June 2024).

² Prime Minister's Office, *UK to stand with Ukraine for as long as it takes, PM to tell NATO*, 10 July 2024 (accessed 1 August 2024).

Summary

Key findings

Overall approach to supporting Ukraine

6 The UK government was an early provider of military support to Ukraine and announced its first major tranche of funding, £1.3 billion, in May 2022. The Ministry of Defence's (MoD's) response builds on a history of UK military support since Ukraine's independence in 1991, which increased following Russia's annexation of Crimea in 2014. The MoD provided light anti-tank missiles to the Armed Forces of Ukraine (AFU) in January 2022, when Russia had begun assembling troops near the Ukrainian border and UK intelligence increasingly suggested Russia had decided to invade Ukraine. Following the Russian invasion in February 2022, the MoD established 'Operation Scorpius' to coordinate its various activities in support of Ukraine (paragraphs 1.2 to 1.3, 1.8 to 1.10 and Figure 6).

7 The MoD's support for Ukraine is guided by wider UK foreign policy and is part of a coordinated international response. The MoD has sought to sequence its supply of some equipment so that it is responding to Russian escalation. The International Donor Coordination Centre, a UK-led multinational unit based in Wiesbaden, Germany, coordinates responses to Ukrainian requests for equipment and oversees delivery. The MoD also aims to complement rather than compete with the procurement strategies of other countries (paragraphs 2.3 and 2.6).

8 The UK government has committed £7.8 billion to military support for Ukraine to date, from HM Treasury's Reserve rather than the MoD's budget. Following the initial announcement of £1.3 billion funding in May 2022, successive prime ministers have announced further tranches of funding between June 2022 and April 2024. The MoD has worked with HM Treasury to agree the detailed objectives for the funding and to formalise approval of the funding amounts. Funding comes from HM Treasury's Reserve, a centrally held fund that can be used to fund unexpected financial pressures, rather than the MoD's core budget (paragraphs 1.12 to 1.19 and Figures 5, 6 and 7).

9 As well as spending on support for Ukraine, the UK is donating equipment from UK military stockpiles and using some of the Reserve funding for Ukraine to replace it. The £7.8 billion funding commitment includes some of the replacement cost, rather than the current value, of equipment donated from UK stockpiles. This equipment, donated up to the end of March 2024, had a current value of £171.5 million, given depreciation. The MoD estimates the cost of replacing this donated equipment at £2.71 billion. This will be spent (at least initially from the Reserve funding to support Ukraine) over the years up to 2030-31. The higher value of this replacement spending reflects the cost of replacing old equipment with new, and in some cases more advanced technology (paragraphs 2.7 to 2.11 and Figure 9).

10 The UK government has contributed to multinational efforts to assist Ukraine, and considers that its supply of equipment has been important in securing additional commitments from other governments. Separately from its direct procurement for Ukraine, the MoD also manages the International Fund for Ukraine (IFU), which brings together contributions from nine nations to procure military equipment. At July 2024 the IFU had received funds of £926 million, to which the UK had contributed £500 million. In the UK's own donations of equipment to Ukraine, one of the factors the MoD considers is the 'catalytic effect', where supplying certain equipment can encourage other nations to supply similar capabilities. Meanwhile, UK military personnel delivering training for the AFU have worked with teams of trainers from 12 partner nations (paragraphs 1.6 to 1.7, 2.6, 3.4 to 3.6, 3.10 and Figure 3).

The MoD's management of the response

11 The MoD has developed its approach to managing its support to Ukraine over the past two years and, since early 2023, has established processes aimed at rapid and efficient decision-making. Operation Scorpius brings together various teams from different parts of the MoD, in four key areas of activity coordinated by a central 'mission team'. It has developed in three iterations, from a less structured initial response focused on providing support urgently, to a more formalised structure as the conflict has continued. Regular management group and ministerial update meetings provide direction and plan future activity, with tighter and more frequent monitoring of expenditure against agreed totals than is usual for UK operations. The MoD is planning for longer-term support for Ukraine in line with the government's commitment to provide £3 billion a year in military support until 2030-31, and for as long as needed (paragraphs 1.8 to 1.11 and Figure 4).

12 The MoD has used non-competitive procurement processes to speed up the supply of equipment to Ukraine. In addition to donating supplies from its own military stockpiles, the MoD has directly procured equipment for Ukraine from military suppliers and other nations. By March 2024, the MoD had spent £2.4 billion on procuring equipment since April 2022, placing 715 contracts by the end of June 2024. This is in addition to the £500 million contribution which the MoD has made to military procurement over this period via the International Fund for Ukraine. The MoD's Defence Equipment and Support (DE&S), which carries out the procurement process, told us that under Operation Scorpius it had significantly improved its normal procurement timescales, although exact comparisons are difficult to make. DE&S does not record how many of its procurements for Ukraine have been 'single source', meaning they were awarded without competition. To speed up its supply efforts, the MoD has exempted all such procurements for Ukraine from regulations which normally provide additional oversight over non-competitive contracts. As the conflict has continued, DE&S has sought to run competitive tendering exercises, in cases where the Ukrainian demand for equipment has become more consistent and predictable (paragraphs 2.13 to 2.21).

Delivery of military equipment and training

13 By March 2024, the MoD had provided equipment worth £2.59 billion to Ukraine, through a combination of donations from UK stockpiles and rapid procurement from industry. This reflects spending on procurement plus the current value of equipment donated from UK stockpiles. Equipment supplied to Ukraine includes missiles, drones, 14 Challenger 2 tanks, artillery and small arms ammunition, three Sea King helicopters, communications equipment and personal equipment such as body armour and helmets. Taskforce Kindred (TFK), a team of MoD staff within Operation Scorpius, manages the response to requests from the AFU and works with DE&S to source the required equipment. DE&S has demonstrated innovation in sourcing equipment for Ukraine, for example, organising the manufacture of replacement tracks for Ukraine's Soviet-era T72 tanks, drawing on sources including technical drawings and samples in the collection of the Tank Museum in Dorset. DE&S's logistics contractor Team Leidos delivers the majority of the equipment by road, to 'Logistics Enablement Nodes' in Eastern Europe, where it is handed over to the AFU. The Royal Air Force also delivers some equipment to these drop-off points by air (paragraphs 2.2 to 2.4, 2.13, 2.24 to 2.25, 2.28, and Figure 8).

14 The MoD has reduced the amount of equipment it is donating from UK military stockpiles since 2023, and has announced increased spending on stockpiles to support UK military resilience. The MoD has prioritised older items in identifying equipment to donate to Ukraine and takes into account the risks to the UK's military readiness, based on NATO warfighting requirements. The MoD considers that stockpiles need to be replenished to compensate for donations to Ukraine, and also augmented. In addition to the £2.7 billion it expects to spend replacing equipment donated to Ukraine, the government has increased wider funding for UK military stockpiles by £2.51 billion between 2022-23 and 2024-25, with the then Prime Minister making a further commitment in April 2024 to invest £10 billion in munitions production over the next decade (paragraphs 2.7 to 2.12).

15 By the end of July 2024 the UK had trained 42,050 Ukrainian recruits through its main training programme, since its launch in June 2022. The programme, 'Operation Interflex', has built on the UK-led 'Operation Orbital', which provided non-lethal military training to 22,000 AFU personnel between 2015 and 2022. Interflex trains infantry soldiers, platoon commanders and instructors, in a five-week course based on the British Army's training programme for new recruits. The UK also provides specialist training programmes in medical and engineering skills, equipment operation and maintenance, as well as training for marine forces and pilots (paragraphs 3.2 to 3.3, 3.6, 3.9 to 3.10, and Figure 12).

16 Providing training to Ukrainian recruits has reduced the availability of training facilities for UK armed forces. The British Army delivers the Interflex training programmes at its training sites in the UK: this is taking up more than a quarter of the Army's training estate, reducing the available capacity for the Army's own training programmes. Army units which bid for time at the training sites in 2023 had their bids rejected at eight times the rate in 2019, before the Ukraine war and the COVID-19 pandemic, because sites were not available. The MoD has acknowledged that Interflex will constrain the British Army's capability to train its own soldiers on its training sites (paragraph 3.17).

Concluding remarks

17 In line with the UK's long-standing support for Ukraine, the government has made the conflict a key priority since the Russian invasion, committing £7.8 billion of Reserve funding to supporting Ukraine to date. The MoD initially aimed to be a leader in the international response and focused on acting quickly, through less structured functions and processes. As the war has continued, the MoD has established more routine management processes and oversight, and has captured the lessons learned. Throughout, the MoD has sought international coordination, with a strategic approach that aims to complement the equipment supplied by other countries and a training programme that works with military instructors from 12 partner nations. The MoD has delivered large volumes of military equipment and has trained 42,050 infantry soldiers and many more specialist personnel for the AFU. As the MoD considers its future support for Ukraine, it will need to continue to balance Ukraine's needs and the UK's strategic interests with the need to maintain the UK's own military capabilities, through maintaining stocks of equipment and sufficient training provision for UK forces.