



National Audit Office



REPORT

Investigation into military support for Ukraine

Ministry of Defence

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National Audit Office

Investigation into military support for Ukraine

Ministry of Defence

Report by the Comptroller and Auditor General

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National Audit Act 1983 for presentation to the House of
Commons in accordance with Section 9 of the Act

Gareth Davies
Comptroller and Auditor General
National Audit Office

3 September 2024

Investigations

We conduct investigations to establish the underlying facts in circumstances where concerns have been raised with us, or in response to intelligence that we have gathered through our wider work.

Since the Russian invasion in February 2022, the UK government has made a series of announcements of military aid to Ukraine. The aim of this report is to establish a factual narrative of the Ministry of Defence's response to this crisis, focusing on the scale, pace and costs of its efforts.

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Contents

Key facts 4

What this investigation is about 5

Summary 6

Part One

Overview of the UK's military support for Ukraine 11

Part Two

Supplying Ukraine with military equipment 23

Part Three

Training Ukrainian personnel 34

Appendix One

Our investigative approach 41

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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.

Part One

Overview of the UK's military support for Ukraine

1.1 On 24 February 2022 Russia invaded Ukraine, capturing over a quarter of Ukraine's territory and displacing the most people in Europe since the Second World War. As part of its overall response, the UK government has provided military assistance to the government of Ukraine, focusing on supplying military equipment and providing training for the Armed Forces of Ukraine (AFU). This part of the report covers:

- the background to the conflict;
- international provision of military support to Ukraine;
- the UK's 'Operation Scorpius' initiative; and
- the funding and financial management of the UK's military support.

Background to the conflict

1.2 UK military support to Ukraine since the Russian invasion in February 2022 builds on a history of support since Ukraine's independence in 1991, which significantly increased following Russia's annexation of Crimea in 2014. In 2015 the UK government established 'Operation Orbital' (discussed in Part Three of this report), to provide training to the AFU. The UK government also provided several packages of non-lethal military aid. However, it said it was not planning to provide lethal weapons to Ukraine, in line with its assessment at that time that there needed to be a political solution to the crisis.³ These packages were accompanied by several defence agreements, including a 15-year memorandum of understanding signed in 2016 that sought to deepen defence cooperation between the UK and Ukraine.

³ Hansard HC Debate, Volume 592, columns 619–622, 10 February 2015. Available at: *Ukraine – Hansard – UK Parliament* (accessed 13 June 2024).

1.3 Recognising the risks posed by a build-up of Russian forces on Ukraine's borders, the Ministry of Defence (MoD) began supplying Ukraine with weapons to aid its self-defence before the invasion took place. In January 2022 the MoD supplied Ukraine with 2,000 shoulder-launched anti-tank missiles (Next Generation Anti-Tank Light Weapons, or NLAWs) (**Figure 1**). During late 2021 and early 2022, Russia began assembling troops near the Ukrainian border, and UK intelligence increasingly suggested Russia had decided to invade Ukraine. The UK reduced its diplomatic presence and withdrew its training operation from the country. On 24 February 2022, Russian President Vladimir Putin declared the start of a 'special military operation'.

International provision of military support to Ukraine

1.4 According to analysis by the German research organisation the Kiel Institute, a total of 34 countries, as well as the European Union (EU), have provided military support to Ukraine. This support has ranged from helmets, body armour and sleeping bags, to tanks, rocket artillery and air defence systems.

1.5 The UK has provided the third most military assistance (by financial value) to Ukraine, after the United States and Germany (**Figure 2** on page 14). As a share of its own stockpiles, the UK has provided the fourth most multiple-launch rocket artillery systems and the second most howitzers (long-range artillery). In addition to UK military assistance, between February 2022 and March 2024, the UK provided £695 million in non-military assistance to Ukraine (mainly through the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office) including £357 million for humanitarian programmes. The UK has also provided US\$2.5 billion in loan-guarantees (with a further US\$2.5 billion pledged up until March 2027), enabling Ukraine to access loans from the World Bank that have helped it to fund government services.⁴ Taking military and non-military support together, the UK is also the third largest bilateral provider of aid overall, behind the US and Germany.

International Fund for Ukraine

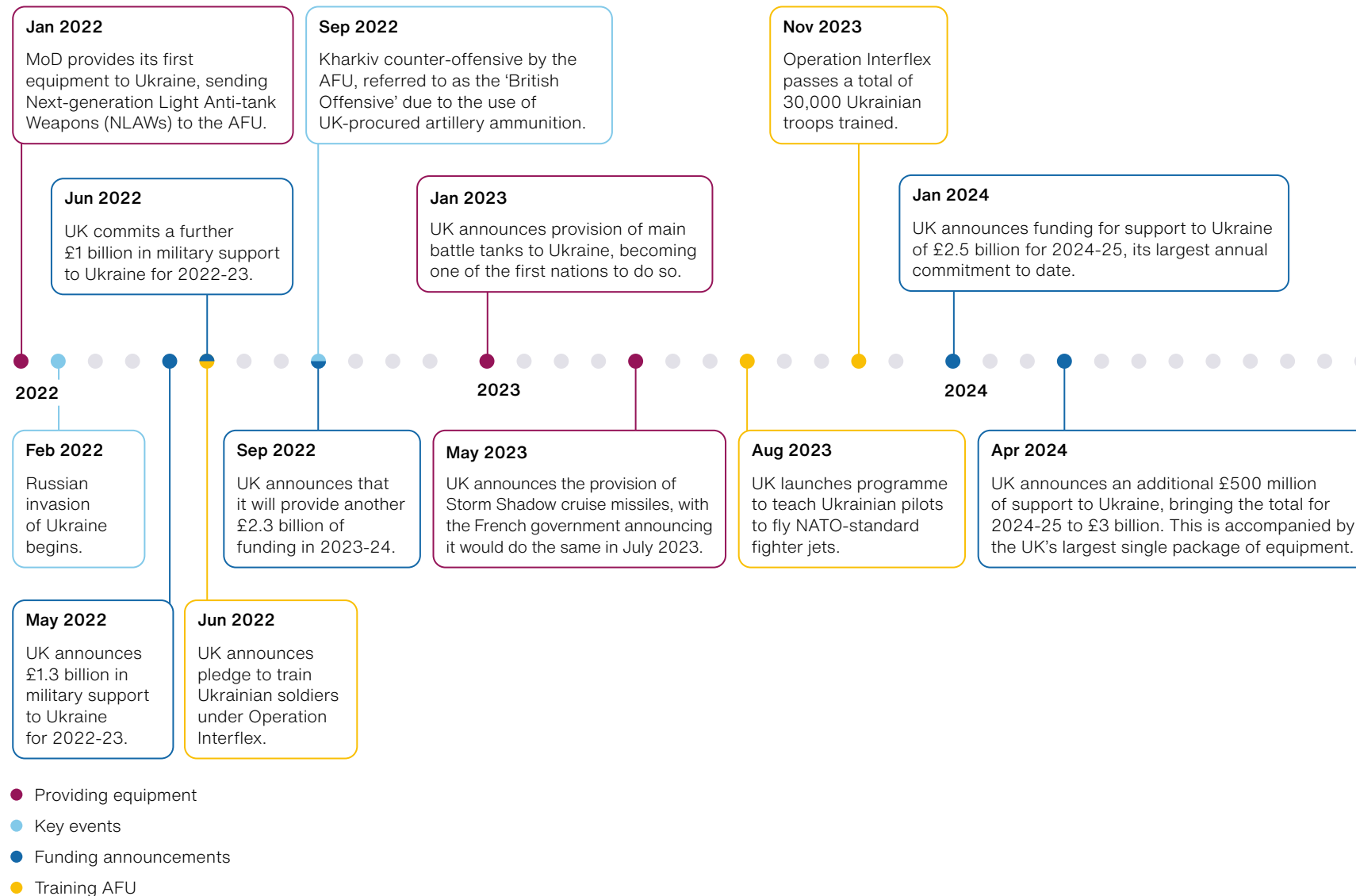
1.6 In August 2022 the UK and Denmark announced the International Fund for Ukraine (IFU) to pool international resources to procure military equipment for Ukraine. Following an international conference in August 2022, the defence ministers of Norway, Sweden and the Netherlands agreed to join the UK and Denmark as the founding members of the IFU. The aim of the fund (which had received contributions totalling £926 million by 1 July 2024) is to demonstrate international solidarity with Ukraine, while increasing the purchasing power of member nations by aggregating contributions (**Figure 3** on page 15). The MoD staffs the IFU's secretariat, manages its bank account and, via its Defence Equipment & Support agency (DE&S), manages the procurement and delivery of purchased equipment.

⁴ The government prefers to report its loan guarantee disbursement figures in US dollars as this is the currency accepted by the World Bank, and used by the International Monetary Fund to measure donor commitments.

Figure 1

Timeline of the UK's response to the conflict in Ukraine, January 2022 to April 2024

The Ministry of Defence (MoD) has provided weapons, equipment and training to the Armed Forces of Ukraine (AFU)

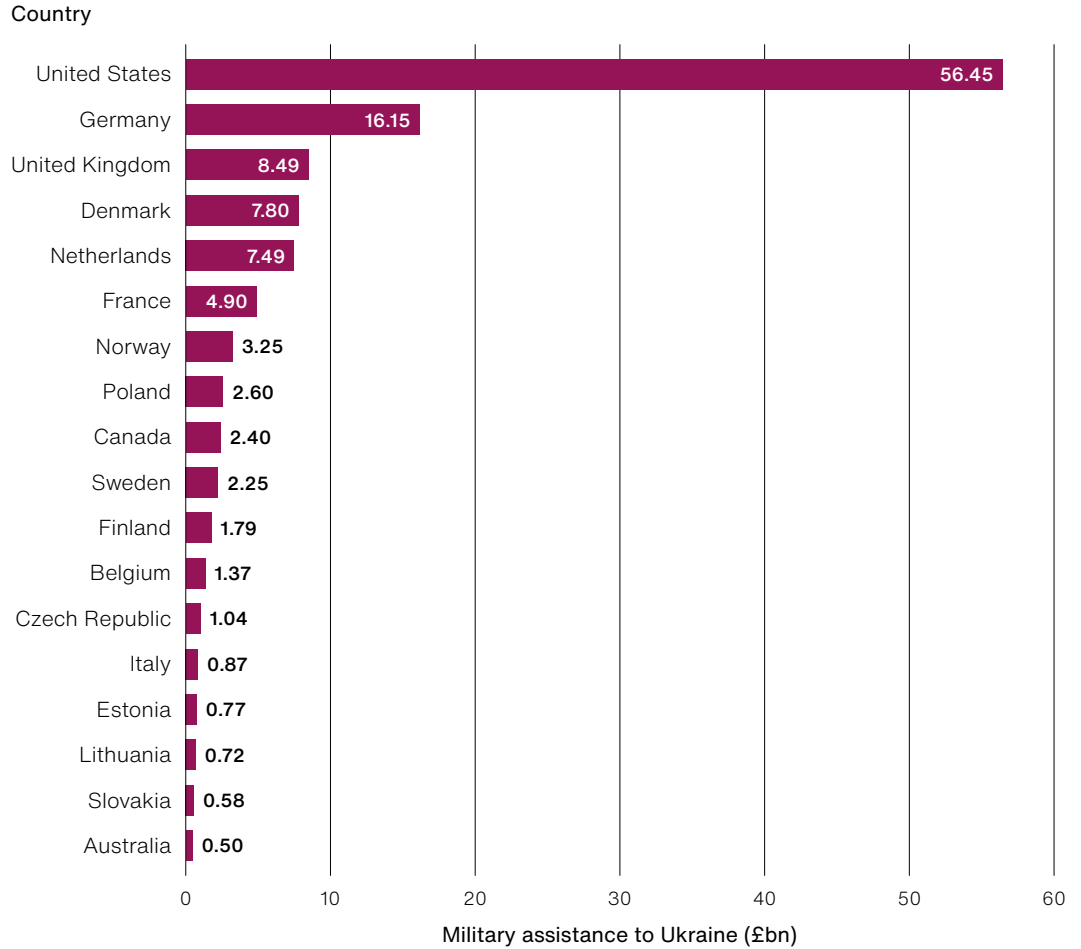


Source: National Audit Office analysis of Ministry of Defence documentation and press releases

Figure 2

Military assistance pledged to Ukraine by other countries, February 2022 to April 2024

The UK is the third largest provider of military aid to Ukraine



Notes

- 1 Figures include military equipment and training, as well as financial support specifically for military purposes. Equipment is valued at the higher end of market prices.
- 2 All values calculated by the Kiel Institute are in euros. We have converted from euros to pounds sterling using the European Central Bank's average exchange rate for the period 24 February 2022 to 31 May 2024.
- 3 The UK total shown here is £8.49 billion. This differs from the Ministry of Defence's (MoD) total (as used elsewhere in this report) of £7.8 billion, because it includes the Kiel Institute's estimate of the market price for an element of the equipment donated by the UK from its existing stockpiles. We are using Kiel Institute analysis to provide a comparison of UK contributions relative to those of other nations.
- 4 This figure excludes 16 additional countries which have made contributions of less than £0.5 billion in military assistance to Ukraine. The countries omitted on this basis are: Spain, Latvia, Bulgaria, Croatia, Luxembourg, Portugal, Greece, Slovenia, Japan, Turkey, Iceland, New Zealand, South Korea, Austria, Romania and Ireland.
- 5 The Kiel Institute is an independent economic research institute based in Germany. The MoD uses data from the Kiel Institute to make international comparisons when required, as it considers them sufficiently reliable for this purpose. It does not maintain its own records of other countries' assistance for Ukraine (other than contributions to the International Fund for Ukraine – see Figure 3).

Source: National Audit Office analysis of Kiel Institute data

Figure 3

International Fund for Ukraine (IFU) contributions

The UK has been the largest donor to the IFU since it was established in 2022

Country	2022-23	2023-24	2024-25	Total
	(£mn)	(£mn)	(£mn)	(£mn)
United Kingdom	250.0	250.0	0.0	500.0
Denmark	44.1	89.3	0.0	133.4
Norway	119.5	0.0	0.0	119.5
Netherlands	88.5	21.3	0.0	109.8
Australia	0.0	0.0	26.3	26.3
Sweden	15.9	10.0	0.0	25.9
Lithuania	1.8	3.5	0.0	5.2
New Zealand	0.0	0.0	3.1	3.1
Iceland	3.0	0.0	0.0	3.0
Total	522.8	374.1	29.4	926.3

Notes

- 1 All figures are the amounts, once converted into pounds sterling at the relevant exchange rate at the time, received into the IFU bank account.
- 2 The UK's contributions are funded from the overall Reserve totals announced in support for Ukraine.
- 3 Figures for 2024-25 include contributions received up to July 2024 only.
- 4 Figures may not sum exactly to the totals shown, due to rounding.

Source: National Audit Office analysis of Ministry of Defence data

1.7 As at July 2024 the IFU had committed £729 million across 34 contracts, of which £253.6 million had actually been spent, and with a further £129 million of contracts under negotiation. The MoD views the IFU as complementing rapid procurement by member governments. This has enabled the MoD to seek expressions of interest from suppliers around the world, helping it to identify critical equipment for Ukraine available in the global market. The MoD has streamlined its processes for assessing bids from suppliers over successive procurement rounds, in order to speed up these processes. In May 2024, the IFU Executive Panel approved changes to the IFU operating model to speed up procurement timelines further, meaning it will no longer seek expressions of interest before placing contracts.

The UK's Operation Scorpius initiative

1.8 Operation Scorpius refers to the MoD's main activities in support of Ukraine. It includes various MoD functions, in the Department's headquarters and in other parts of the organisation (see **Figure 4**), who carry out activities relating to the UK response to the conflict. Operation Scorpius has four main priorities:

- 'fight now', aiming to provide Ukraine with the support it needs to counter Russian military advances, including equipment and training;
- 'fight future' seeking to enable Ukraine to defend itself beyond the end of the current war;
- security assurances, referring to the MoD's work to support European security both through bilateral arrangements with individual countries and by working with NATO and the EU; and
- industrial mobilisation, referring to the development of the UK's defence industrial base, to improve its ability to support Ukraine over the long term.

The Scorpius Mission Team sits at the centre of these four strands of activity, devising strategy, setting strategic objectives, and providing oversight and scrutiny of operations. Some 233 MoD staff work in Operation Scorpius, increased from 127 in March 2022. The Mission Team aligns its strategy with MoD's wider Russia strategy.

1.9 Other government departments also contribute to Operation Scorpius. HM Treasury approves its budget, which is drawn from the Reserve (see paragraphs 1.14 to 1.15). The Department for Business and Trade (DBT) works with MoD on Taskforce Hirst, a Scorpius unit working to develop closer industrial cooperation between the UK and Ukraine. DBT has led trade missions to Ukraine in support of this objective.

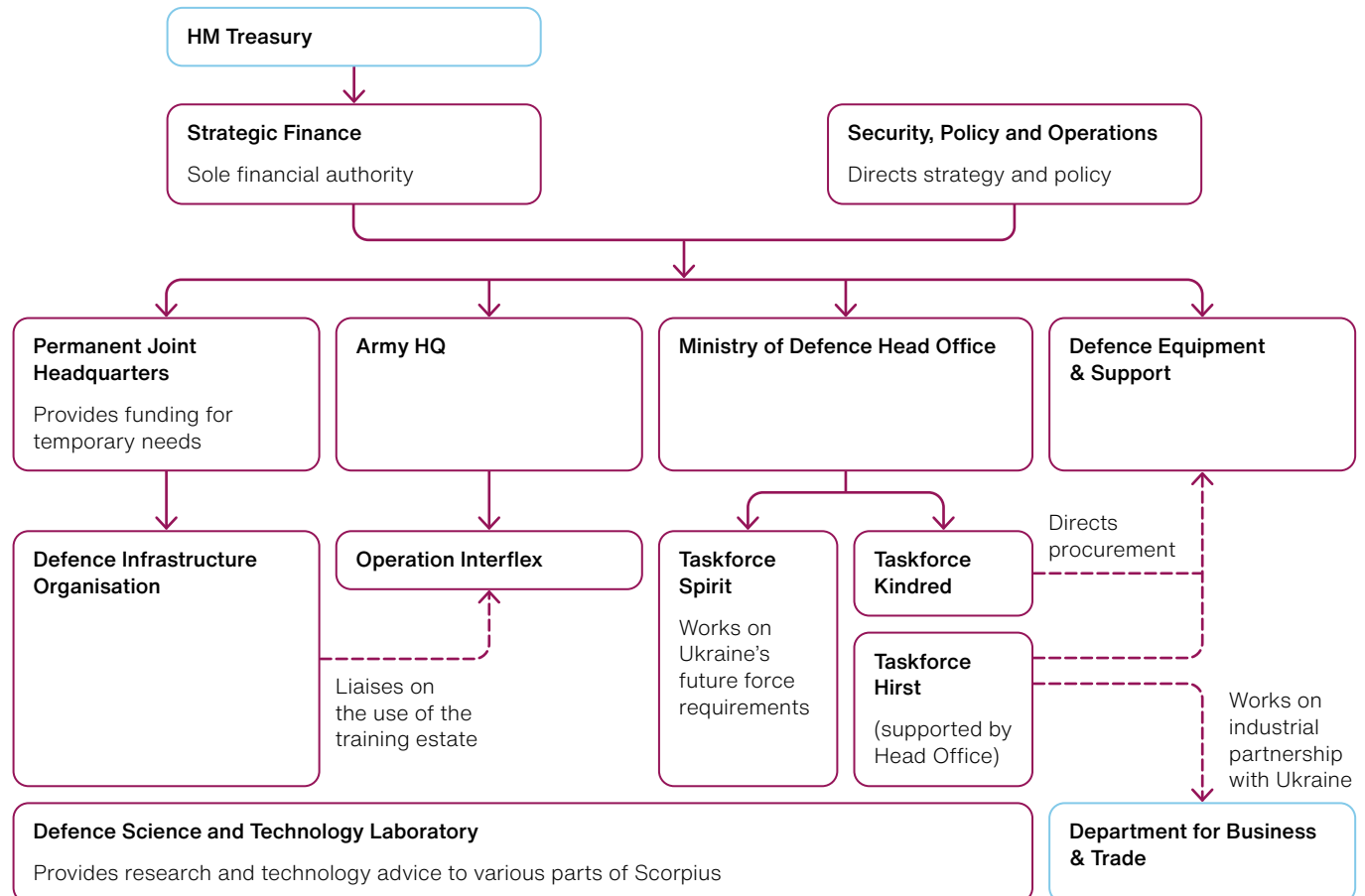
1.10 The MoD rapidly established Operation Scorpius to coordinate and orchestrate the various activities it was undertaking in support of Ukraine. The MoD formalised Scorpius as the war progressed, clarifying its aims, major lines of activity and governance. Regular management group and ministerial update meetings have been held since early to mid-2023 to provide direction and plan future activities. These meetings bring together ministers and military and civilian representation from across Scorpius. 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.⁵

5 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).

Figure 4

Teams and organisations contributing to Operation Scorpius, the Ministry of Defence's (MoD's) support for Ukraine

Operation Scorpius brings together a network of policy, military, financial, and procurement teams



→ Oversight

- - -> Other working relationship

□ Other government departments, not part of the Ministry of Defence

Notes

- 1 Permanent Joint Headquarters commands joint and multilateral military operations on behalf of the Ministry of Defence (MoD).
- 2 Taskforce Kindred refers to the MoD's effort to provide equipment to the Armed Forces of Ukraine (AFU), from UK stockpiles and rapid procurement.
- 3 Taskforce Spirit works to support the development of the AFU's capabilities over the long term, in conjunction with Kindred.
- 4 Taskforce Hirst promotes industrial cooperation between the UK and Ukraine to boost the UK's defence industry and provide lasting support to Ukraine.

Source: National Audit Office analysis of Ministry of Defence documentation

1.11 The MoD has carried out ‘lessons learned’ reviews for some parts of the Scorpious operation, which have varied in scope and formality. For example, DE&S has worked with MoD Head Office and industry to review the relationship between industry and defence, and maintains a formal ‘lessons learned’ process. Similarly, Taskforce Kindred receives regular feedback from Ukrainian forces about the effectiveness of the equipment it is providing, which it considers for future procurement requests. It also passes these lessons to UK forces to improve UK decision-making.

Funding and financial management of the UK’s military support

1.12 As of summer 2024, including spending to date and funding announced for 2024-25, the government expects to spend £7.8 billion on military support for Ukraine between January 2022 and March 2025 (**Figure 5**).

1.13 Spending on Ukraine has driven a marked rise in 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.⁶

Figure 5

Annual UK spending on military support for Ukraine

Since 2022-23 the government has provided the Ministry of Defence with at least £2.3 billion a year in support for Ukraine

Q4 2021-22	2022-23	2023-24	2024-25	Total
(£bn)	(£bn)	(£bn)	(£bn)	(£bn)
0.03	2.46	2.29	3.00	7.78

Notes

- 1 The figure for 2021-22 is from the final quarter of that financial year, and relates to the provision of military support immediately before and following the Russian invasion on 24 February 2022.
- 2 The figure for 2022-23 is higher than the publicly announced funding of £2.3 billion for the year in part due to higher-than-expected spend on replenishing UK stockpiles to replace equipment donated to Ukraine.
- 3 The figure for 2024-25 is funding for the year announced by the Prime Minister in April 2024.
- 4 These totals include the UK’s contributions to the International Fund for Ukraine.
- 5 These totals include initial payments towards the cost of replacing donated equipment. They do not include the depreciated value of the equipment donated from UK military stockpiles.

Source: National Audit Office analysis of Ministry of Defence data; Ministry of Defence, *MoD Departmental Resources 2023*, 30 November 2023; Prime Minister’s Office, “PM to announce largest-ever military aid package to Ukraine on visit to Poland”, 23 April 2024

6 Ministry of Defence, *MOD Departmental resources: 2023*, 30 November 2023 (accessed 13 June 2024).

Setting annual funding totals

1.14 The government has announced a series of funding packages for Ukraine, since 2022 (**Figure 6**). Funding for Operation Scorpius comes from HM Treasury’s Reserve rather than MoD’s core budget. The Reserve is a centrally held fund that can be used to fund unexpected demands on government departments, within the relevant financial year. The Treasury has funded some aspects of support for Ukraine, such as training, from the Special Reserve. This is the same way as UK military operations are funded: the Special Reserve is a part of the General Reserve, which is only available to the MoD and not used by other government departments. As a pre-condition for the MoD requesting Reserve funding from HM Treasury for military operations, the operational activity has to be endorsed by the National Security Council.⁷

Figure 6

Headline announcements of Reserve funding, 2022-23 to 2024-25

Since 2022-23 the government has announced annual totals of at least £2.3 billion in military funding for Ukraine

Financial year	Amount (£bn)	Announced by	Date announced
2022-23	1.3	Minister for Defence People and Veterans	11 May 2022
2022-23	1.0	Prime Minister	30 June 2022
2023-24	2.3	Prime Minister	20 September 2022
2024-25	2.5	Prime Minister	12 January 2024
2024-25	0.5	Prime Minister	23 April 2024

Notes

- 1 The announcement made by the Prime Minister on 20 September 2022 did not specify a figure of £2.3 billion for the following year, but rather committed to match or exceed the amount (£2.3 billion at that date) committed to Ukraine in 2022-23.
- 2 Total announced funding for 2022-23 (£2.3 billion) was lower than spending in 2022-23 (£2.46 billion: see Figure 5) in part because of higher-than-anticipated spending on replenishment of UK military stockpiles in that year.
- 3 In July 2024 the Chancellor announced that the size of the Reserve set at the 2024 Spring Budget (£9.2 billion) was not large enough to fund a number of commitments, including £1.5 billion of the £3 billion military support for Ukraine announced for 2024-25. However, the Chancellor committed to honouring the £3 billion pledged for Ukraine in full. This funding was provided to the Ministry of Defence in the 2024-25 Main Estimates, published in July 2024.

Source: Hansard HC Debate, volume 714, column 132, 11 May 2022; Prime Minister’s Office, “PM announces further £1 billion in military support to Ukraine”, 30 June 2022; “UK will match record Ukraine support in 2023”, 20 September 2022; “PM in Kyiv: UK support will not falter”, 12 January 2024; “PM to announce largest-ever military aid package to Ukraine on visit to Poland”, 23 April 2024; Hansard HC Debate, volume 752, columns 1033-1035, 29 July 2024; HM Treasury, *Fixing the foundations: public spending audit 2024-25*, 29 July 2024, Table 1; HM Treasury, *Central Government Supply Estimates 2024-25: Main Supply Estimates for the year ending 31 March 2025*, HC139, July 2024

⁷ Chaired by the Prime Minister, the National Security Council (NSC) is the Cabinet’s main forum for collective discussion of government objectives for national security.

1.15 HM Treasury has funded the MoD's procurement of equipment – for Ukraine and to replace donations from UK stockpiles - from the General Reserve, which means that MoD's requirements are weighed against those of other government departments.⁸ The Treasury aimed to avoid setting a precedent that rapid procurement for another country should automatically qualify for Special Reserve funding. The Treasury also wanted to avoid Special Reserve funding being used to supplement MoD's core budget, by replenishing UK stockpiles with equipment which went beyond a like-for-like replacement of donated items. The effect of this has been that the Treasury has subjected government spending proposals for Ukraine to an increased level of challenge, compared to UK operations.

Allocating funding to key lines of activity

1.16 Following the public announcements of funding for Ukraine, the MoD has submitted to HM Treasury detailed sets of proposals for allocating these funding totals across a number of headline priorities, with an account of their rationale and how they relate to the overall objectives of Operation Scorpius. After approving these proposals, HM Treasury formalises the Reserve funding totals available to the MoD (known as 'limits of liability') through financial approval notes. This formal approval can take place months after the funding total has been publicly announced. For example, the £2.3 billion funding for Ukraine in 2023-24 was formally approved by HM Treasury in July 2023, 10 months after the Prime Minister had committed the government to spending at least this total.

1.17 The headline priorities against which the MoD has allocated its Reserve funding are shown in **Figure 7**.

In-year financial management

1.18 The MoD has implemented extensive spending controls over Operation Scorpius, with tighter and more frequent monitoring of expenditure against agreed totals of Reserve funding compared to the UK's own operations. This reflects HM Treasury's concerns about the potentially open-ended nature of making financial commitments to a conflict where the scale and military objectives are beyond the UK's control. HM Treasury has sought to ensure the MoD closely manages its agreed Reserve funding totals to maximise impact while holding to set limits.

⁸ In its public announcements the government has not made a distinction between the General and Special Reserve components of its annual funding totals of military support to Ukraine.

Figure 7

Financial breakdown of Reserve funding for military aid to Ukraine, April 2022 to March 2024

The Ministry of Defence (MoD) has varied its priorities for spending its Reserve funding in each year since the start of the conflict in 2022

Activity	2022-23 (£mn)	2023-24 (£mn)
Rapid Procurement	1,595	820
Operational Support including NATO Comprehensive Assistance Package (CAP)	425	395
International Fund for Ukraine (IFU) contributions	250	250
Cost of Support to Ukraine	0	475
Training	115	200
Replenishment	75	150
Total	2,460	2,290

Notes

- Operational Support represents costs towards operational activity in support of Ukraine including the UK contribution to NATO's CAP for Ukraine.
- Cost of Support to Ukraine is the cost of core activity designated as direct support to Ukraine and counter-Russia operational activity, spread diffusely across the department. These costs include operational activity, workforce costs (e.g. Taskforce Kindred), and infrastructure costs (e.g. training infrastructure). In 2022-23 these costs were absorbed within the MoD's core budget.
- In July 2024 the Prime Minister committed to providing £3 billion a year of military support for Ukraine until 2030-31, and for as long as needed.

Source: National Audit Office analysis of Ministry of Defence data; 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)

1.19 In the early months of the conflict, the MoD relied on less structured processes to manage Reserve spending, moving to more formal processes, based around monthly budget monitoring meetings, from mid-2023. Through these mature processes the MoD introduced a new way of managing operational spending. Bringing together finance specialists, policy officials and military leads, its monthly meetings monitor spending pressures – for example, as a result of deciding to train more Ukrainian personnel under Operation Interflex than planned for at the start of the year – and discuss options for reducing planned spending against other priorities in order to stay within budget. They also reprioritise spending between different lines of activity (for example, additional weapons procurement) based on assessments of maximising military impacts for the remaining level of annual funding.

Accounting for equipment supplied to Ukraine

1.20 For both procured and donated equipment, the MoD has agreed with HM Treasury an accounting approach which has helped to streamline delivery. The MoD treats its supplies to Ukraine as ‘grants-in-kind’, a government accounting category in which the government expects to receive value through achieving certain policy objectives. The MoD regards the supplies it has given to Ukraine as being designed to achieve a benefit for defence, linked to its policy objective to “enhance global security through persistent engagement and response to crises”.⁹

1.21 Categorising its supplies in this way has enabled the MoD to act quickly, since grants-in-kind are not subject to the requirements on ‘gifts’. For all gifts worth more than £300,000, departments must seek HM Treasury approval and lay a statement in the House of Commons, giving MPs at least 14 days to object. For Ukraine, the MoD has instead required that ministers approve all donations of equipment from UK stocks.

⁹ Ministry of Defence, *Ministry of Defence Outcome Delivery Plan: 2021 to 2022*, 15 July 2021 (accessed 13 June 2024).

Part Two

Supplying Ukraine with military equipment

2.1 In this part of the report we set out how the Ministry of Defence (MoD) has been supplying the Ukrainian military with equipment, including both offensive supplies (weapons, vehicles and associated parts) and non-lethal aid (such as clothing and medical supplies). We focus on the MoD's:

- overall supplies of equipment to Ukraine;
- mechanisms for responding to Ukrainian requests;
- strategic approach to supplying Ukraine;
- donating equipment from UK stockpiles;
- rapid procurement; and
- delivering equipment to Ukraine.

Overall supplies of equipment to Ukraine

2.2 Since just before the start of the conflict in February 2022 the MoD has supplied Ukraine with a wide range of military equipment, both donated from UK stockpiles and procured from the defence industry or stockpiles of other nations.¹⁰

Figure 8 on pages 24 and 25 lists broad details of these supplies as publicly disclosed by the MoD.

Mechanisms for responding to Ukrainian requests

2.3 The primary route by which the MoD receives requests for assistance from Ukraine is via the International Donor Co-ordination Centre (IDCC), a UK-led multi-national unit, in Wiesbaden, Germany. The Ukrainian military inputs its requests for equipment onto a single list, which the IDCC shares with international partners for decisions on what each country will supply. Working from this list, the IDCC's UK personnel transmit requests for military assistance to the UK's Permanent Joint Headquarters (PJHQ).¹¹ The MoD also receives requests from Ukraine through other links, including bilateral discussions between UK and Ukrainian ministers and military officials.

¹⁰ As stated in paragraph 1.3, the UK government took the decision to supply Ukraine with 2,000 anti-tank missiles to aid its self-defence in January 2022.

¹¹ Based in Northwood, PJHQ commands joint and multinational operations on behalf of the MoD.

Figure 8

Public disclosures of equipment supplied by the UK to Ukraine

The Ministry of Defence (MoD) has supplied Ukraine with a wide range of lethal and non-lethal equipment

Type of equipment	Announced between January 2022 and April 2024	Announced April 2024	Announced July 2024
Air defence	300 jamming and anti-jamming electronic systems 6 Stormer vehicles fitted with Starstreak missile launchers		
Anti-personnel	4,000 weapons/launchers (including small arms, mortars and grenades) 6,000,000 rounds of ammunition 4.5 tonnes of plastic explosive	Nearly 4 million rounds of small arms ammunition	250,000 rounds of 50 calibre ammunition
Anti-tank	Over 12,000 anti-tank weapons, including Next Generation Light Anti-tank Weapons (NLAWs), Javelin and Brimstone		90 anti-armour Brimstone missiles
Armoured and other vehicles	300 armoured and protected vehicles	Over 400 vehicles, including 160 'Husky' vehicles and 162 armoured vehicles	40 de-mining vehicles 61 bulldozers to help build defensive positions
Artillery	80 artillery systems, including M109 155mm and 36 L119 105mm guns 400,000 rounds of ammunition 50 AS-90 155mm guns		10 AS-90 artillery guns Support for previously donated AS-90s, including 32 new barrels and critical spares which will help Ukraine fire another 60,000 155mm rounds
Drones	Over 4,000 uncrewed systems Long-range attack drones (unspecified number)		
Helicopters	3 Sea Kings		
Maritime		78 amphibious vehicles, 60 military boats, maritime guns, and over 550 missiles and rockets for coastal defence	50 small military boats to support river and coastal operations
Missiles (long-range, strike, and air defence)	1,500 surface-to-air missiles Advanced air-to-air missiles (unspecified number) Storm Shadow cruise missiles (unspecified number)	Over 1,600 strike and air defence missiles, and additional Storm Shadow missiles	

Figure 8 continued

Public disclosures of equipment supplied by the UK to Ukraine

Type of equipment	Announced between January 2022 and April 2024	Announced April 2024	Announced July 2024
Other equipment	200 pallets of medical supplies Over 140 logistics vehicles Over 82,000 helmets 8,450 sets of body armour Over 100 electricity generators 1,000 metal detectors and 100 bomb de-arming kits 25,000 sets of extreme cold weather clothing, 20,000 sleeping bags and 150 insulated tents		
Rocket launchers	Multiple rocket launch systems (unspecified number)		
Tanks	14 Challenger 2 tanks, with over 4,000 rounds of ammunition		

Notes

- 1 This list includes both equipment from existing UK stockpiles and equipment which the Ministry of Defence (MoD) has procured for Ukraine.
- 2 Additionally, the MoD has transferred two minehunter ships to the Ukrainian navy to assist in the future defence of its coastlines, although these ships are currently unable to deploy to the Black Sea due to the Montreux Convention, which restricts passage of military vessels through the Bosphorus Strait at times of war.
- 3 For reasons of national security, the MoD does not disclose full details about the quantities of military equipment it has donated from its stockpiles.

Source: National Audit Office analysis of Ministry of Defence data; Ministry of Defence, "Former Royal Navy ships transferred to Ukraine's Navy arrive in Portsmouth for multi-national exercise", 11 April 2024

2.4 The MoD's response to Ukrainian requests is led by Taskforce Kindred, an MoD unit established in March 2022. Kindred grew from an initial staff of eight to 30 in the first weeks of the war, subsequently reducing to around 20 as it moved to a more mature operational model. Kindred leads the MoD's efforts to identify equipment to donate from UK stockpiles, and to recommend (for ministerial approval) those items which the UK should procure for Ukraine. Kindred also responds to requests for guidance from the Ukrainian military on how to use equipment donated by the UK most effectively: for example, it has provided advice on operating artillery to both increase military impact and preserve supplies of ammunition.

Strategic approach to supplying Ukraine

2.5 As a key element of ‘Operation Scorpius’, Kindred works within a strategic decision-making structure which includes:

- ministers;
- senior policy officials, who integrate decision-making into strategic concerns on international relations;
- military leads, who oversee the impact of equipment donations on UK military readiness; and
- Defence Equipment & Support (DE&S), which oversees the legal and practical work of procuring equipment from suppliers.

2.6 The MoD takes a range of strategic factors into account when deciding on the types of equipment to supply to Ukraine, including the following.

- **Risks of escalation:** The MoD has sought to sequence its supply of certain weapons, so that it is responding to Russian escalation. For example, in May 2023 the MoD decided to supply Ukraine with long-range Storm Shadow missiles, after Russian attacks on Ukrainian infrastructure.¹²
- **Co-ordination with international partners:** The MoD has aimed to complement rather than compete with the procurement strategies of other countries. In 2023-24, for example, the MoD decided to focus on other ammunition types rather than NATO-standard 155mm artillery ammunition for Ukraine – which international partners were already procuring at scale – in order to reduce upward pressure on prices.
- **Catalytic effect on international donations:** Beyond the direct military impact of its donations, the MoD has focused on the effects of supplying certain weapons on the readiness of other nations to supply similar capabilities. Following the UK donation of Storm Shadow missiles in May 2023, for example, the French government began supplying equivalent SCALP missiles, with the United States supplying ATACMS missiles in autumn 2023.

Donating equipment from UK stockpiles

2.7 Taskforce Kindred leads the MoD’s efforts to identify what UK military stocks could be used to meet Ukrainian requests, working with DE&S to match requests against available UK inventory. The MoD’s assessment of which equipment to donate, and in what quantities, takes into account risks to the UK’s military readiness, based on NATO warfighting requirements. Ministers have made the final decisions on what to donate.

¹² The Secretary of State for Defence spelled out this rationale in a ministerial statement on 11 May 2023: Hansard HC Debate. Volume 732, column 472, 11 May 2023. Available at: *Ukraine – Hansard – UK Parliament*.

2.8 In identifying equipment to donate, the MoD has prioritised older items. While such equipment was often due to be scrapped or replaced, the MoD believes the equipment it has donated has had an immediate military value to the Armed Forces of Ukraine (AFU). In some cases, donating supplies has reduced waste or costs relating to disposal. For example, in March 2022 the MoD donated 17,010 pairs of unused Army boots which were nearing the end of their usable life: had the MoD been unable to sell this surplus stock it would have been sent to landfill.

2.9 As the MoD already owned the equipment it has donated from its stockpiles, it has not had to pay for these donations from its annual totals of Reserve funding for Ukraine. At the same time, these were valuable military assets, and the MoD has recorded the value of its donations as they are issued from its stores. As at end of March 2024, the total value of equipment donated from UK stockpiles since February 2022 was £171.5 million: **Figure 9** breaks this total down by year. Since mid-2023 the MoD has sharply reduced its donations of equipment, because it assessed that to continue would have imposed unacceptable risks to the UK's military readiness.

2.10 The MoD has estimated the cost of replacing its donated equipment as £2.71 billion, to be spent (at least initially from the Reserve funding to support Ukraine) over the years up to 2030-31.¹³ This is necessarily higher than the net book value of the MoD's donations – reflecting their original cost, minus depreciation for ageing and wear and tear – since the MoD is replacing old equipment with new, and in some cases buying more advanced technology.¹⁴ The replenishment forecast includes both contractual figures, for procurements agreed to date, and indicative estimates for future procurement. These estimates will be refined during contractual negotiations. The MoD used £75 million Reserve funding to begin this process of replenishment in 2022-23, increasing to £150 million in 2023-24. By May 2024 the MoD had placed replenishment contracts worth almost £1 billion.

Figure 9

Net book value of equipment donated from UK military stockpiles between 2022 and 2024

The Ministry of Defence reduced donations from UK stockpiles after 2022-23

Q4 2021-22	2022-23	2023-24	Total
(£mn)	(£mn)	(£mn)	(£mn)
25.6	130.0	15.9	171.5

Note

1 Net book value is calculated as the original cost of an asset minus depreciation, representing its loss of value due to ageing and wear and tear.

Source: National Audit Office analysis of Ministry of Defence data

13 Not all donated equipment is being replaced by this funding. HM Treasury has ruled that, where donated equipment was already scheduled for disposal, or where a replacement was already being funded from within MoD's core budget, it would be ineligible for replenishment funding from the Reserve.

14 For example, the squadron of 14 Challenger II tanks that MoD donated to Ukraine in 2023 had a net book value of £17 million, a reduction of 64% compared to their original purchase cost (between 1998 and 2001) of £47 million.

2.11 The total value of the MoD's support to Ukraine differs from the government's announcements of annual Reserve funding, because the value of donated equipment from UK stockpiles is not included in these figures, while the cost of replacing donated equipment is included. In practice, the Reserve funding total of £2.46 billion in 2022-23 understated the value of the UK's military contribution, since the MoD made a high volume of donations in that year while only using £75 million of Reserve funding to begin purchasing replacement equipment. From 2023-24, this situation has reversed, with fewer donations from UK stockpiles on top of Reserve funding, and more Reserve funding devoted to buying replacement equipment for the UK.

Military resilience

2.12 The MoD considers that lessons from the Ukraine conflict highlight the need for sufficient stockpiles of munitions to sustain maritime, air, and land operations, a requirement heightened by the donations it has made from its existing stockpiles.¹⁵ In addition to the funding for replenishment in the annual totals of Reserve funding for Ukraine, HM Treasury has announced additional core funding for the MoD of £2.51 billion for UK military stockpiles, made up of the following.

- Following the 2022 Autumn Statement, HM Treasury announced up to £0.56 billion for munitions.
- At the 2023 Spring Budget the Treasury announced £1.95 billion for resilience over two years.

Additionally, in April 2024 the then Prime Minister committed to investing at least an additional £10 billion in munitions production over the coming decade.¹⁶

Rapid procurement

2.13 In addition to donating supplies from its own military stockpiles, the MoD has procured equipment for Ukraine from military suppliers and other nations. Between April 2022 and March 2024, the MoD spent £2.42 billion of Reserve funding on its own procurement for Ukraine. Adding the £171.5 million net book value of equipment donated from UK stockpiles to the UK procurement takes the total value of equipment donated directly by the UK to Ukraine over this period to £2.59 billion.¹⁷

¹⁵ Ministry of Defence, *Annual Report and Accounts 2023-24*, HC 65, July 2024, p. 31 [accessed 31 July 2024].

¹⁶ Comptroller and Auditor General, *The Equipment Plan 2023-2033*, Session 2023-24, HC 315, December 2023, Figure 14; Prime Minister's Office, *PM announces 'turning point' in European security as UK set to increase defence spending to 2.5% by 2030*, 24 April 2024. The £10 billion commitment made in April 2024 superseded an earlier MoD commitment to invest £2.5 billion in munitions, made in 2023 (Ministry of Defence, *Defence's response to a more contested and volatile world*, Cp 901, July 2023, p 57).

¹⁷ The UK also contributed £500 million to the International Fund for Ukraine in this period (see Figure 3).

Accelerating procurement

2.14 Prior to this conflict, the MoD already had an accelerated procurement system: its Urgent Capability Requirements (UCR) process, designed for cases involving “unforeseen threats, mission critical operational risk, or essential safety requirement[s] that pose an intolerable risk to life”.¹⁸ However, DE&S considered this, while faster than standard defence procurement, too slow for Ukraine’s needs: a ‘good’ UCR could still take 18 months.

2.15 DE&S told us that under Operation Scorpius it had significantly improved on its normal procurement timescales: for example, supplying Ukraine with wheeled anti-aircraft equipment in around six weeks, compared to the one to two years it would normally take. Overall, for smaller value contracts (under £1 million) it has taken DE&S an average of 115 days to deliver its procurements for Ukraine, while for larger contracts (over £20 million) it has taken an average of 332 days.¹⁹ DE&S said it was hard to make general comparisons with the procurement timescales in its ‘business-as-usual’ work, as these may vary with the type of equipment and whether it required bespoke development or could be purchased ‘off the shelf’. However, it pointed to one example of ‘business-as-usual’ procurement (of ‘off-the-shelf’ safety suits), that was comparable to some of its procurement for Ukraine, which had taken 430 days to fully deliver.

2.16 To achieve these shorter timescales, MoD has:

- redesigned procurement processes;
- used non-competitive procurements with reduced oversight requirements;
- reformed and expanded DE&S teams; and
- used alternative approaches to assembling weapons systems, with reduced testing requirements.

¹⁸ Hansard HC written answer. *Defence: Procurement*. UIN 133555. 1 February 2023.

¹⁹ These procurement timescales are measured from the day DE&S is first tasked with procuring a package of equipment to the day on which the package is fully delivered. In some cases the time taken to deliver an initial consignment of the order can be less than this. These measures of elapsed time include weekends and public holidays.

Redesigning procurement processes

2.17 In designing a new procurement process for Operation Scorpius, DE&S sought to cut administrative steps to a minimum while maintaining a clear audit trail.

Within this process, Taskforce Kindred:

- makes an initial assessment of the effectiveness, availability, and cost of the specified weapons system;
- secures ministerial authorisation for the prospective purchase: in the first year of the conflict each proposed purchase was itemised in ministerial submissions, but by April 2024 the MoD had moved to a system of relying on a single ministerial approval in advance for all purchases over the 2024-25 financial year;
- logs details of the items to be purchased (including ministerial authorisation, costs and delivery date) on a single master list, functioning as the MoD's main audit trail of procurement for Ukraine; and
- on behalf of all four Front Line Commands, tasks DE&S to manage the procurement.²⁰

2.18 DE&S manages the purchasing and delivery processes, including:

- meeting Kindred twice weekly to assess the urgency of requests;
- advising Kindred on the likely costs and availability of proposed items, drawing on staff with specialist understanding of relevant markets; and
- placing contracts with suppliers, drawing down Reserve funding to pay them: as of 30 June 2024, DE&S had placed 715 such contracts.

Using non-competitive procurement

2.19 MoD has used 'single source' contracts without competition for some of its equipment procurement to Ukraine and told us that this was sometimes necessary for rapid procurement, or where key equipment was only manufactured by one supplier. DE&S does not record how many of its procurements under Operation Scorpius have been single source. Defence procurement sometimes requires single source contracts because of a smaller number of suppliers than in other industries or for reasons of national security. In a 2017 report we found that 51% of MoD equipment contracts in 2016-17 were uncompetitive.²¹

²⁰ The MoD's Front Line Commands are the Royal Navy, the British Army, the Royal Air Force, and UK Strategic Command.

²¹ Comptroller and Audit General, *Improving value for money in non-competitive procurement of defence equipment*, HC 412, National Audit Office, October 2017, pages 4 and 13-14.

2.20 Single source procurement increases risks to value for money by removing competition. DE&S told us it sought to safeguard value for money while pursuing rapid procurement by:

- placing orders through existing frameworks, where unit prices had already been subject to competition;
- benchmarking prices against comparators from previous procurements, market engagement or desktop research, taking account of price increases due to increased demand since the start of the Ukraine war;
- using its sector specialists to review the costs of new design and development work, where this could not be directly compared to previous work; and
- running competitive tendering exercises, in cases where the Ukrainian demand for equipment has become more consistent and predictable as the conflict has continued; for example, DE&S has run a competitive procurement to supply heavy artillery ammunition for a 12-month period, and a framework competition to select a one-way attack drone design.

2.21 To speed the administration of single source procurements for Ukraine, the MoD has exempted these contracts from regulations designed to subject them to enhanced oversight. The Single Source Contract Regulations normally require ‘open book’ accounting for contracts worth £5 million or more, enabling the MoD to see how much profit a supplier is making and to specify maximum profit rates.²² Under Operation Scorpius, the Secretary of State has provided a ‘blanket’ exemption for all single source contracts which would otherwise be covered by the regulations. As of June 2024, DE&S had let 80 contracts to supply Ukraine, worth approximately £1.27 billion, which would have been subject to the regulations without this exemption.

Reforming and expanding DE&S teams

2.22 DE&S built on its experience of rapid response to the COVID-19 pandemic in adapting its organisation to support Operation Scorpius. Its Operations team, developed from a cross-organisation COVID response team, led the MoD’s initial procurements for Ukraine. After September 2022, when the MoD instructed DE&S to move onto a ‘war footing’ in its support for Ukraine, DE&S expanded this into a directorate headed by a senior military officer, and doubled its staffing from an initial complement of 35 to around 70 by spring 2024.²³ It did this by taking on experienced personnel from elsewhere in DE&S, with additional costs funded by the Special Reserve.

²² *The Single Source Contract Regulations 2014*. *The Single Source Contract Regulations 2014*, legislation.gov.uk.

²³ DE&S’s Operations Directorate is led by a two-star officer (i.e. at the rank of Major-General). This underlines the status which DE&S has accorded its Operations Directorate: there are only two ranks higher in active service (three-star, or Lieutenant General, and four-star, or General).

2.23 The Operations directorate has established a 'gateway' team as a single channel for all requests for equipment, assessing the urgency of requests and directing them to the appropriate procurement specialists. DE&S said this streamlined the procurement process for Kindred, while helping it to maintain an overview of these requests.

Using innovative approaches to assemble military capabilities

2.24 DE&S has developed innovative ways of sourcing military equipment, in order to accelerate the supply of weapons and meet Ukrainian demands for equipment that is not used by UK forces. Examples include the following:

- **T72 tank tracks:** Ukraine extensively uses former Soviet equipment, such as T72 tanks, and requires spare parts including tank tracks. In 2022 the MoD approached Cook Defence Systems, a UK-based manufacturer, for help. Using Soviet technical drawings and samples, some provided by the MoD and others provided by the Tank Museum in Bovington, Dorset, from its historical collection, the company reverse engineered tracks for T72s and other armoured fighting vehicles.
- **L119 light artillery guns:** In spring 2022 DE&S asked UK-based arms manufacturers about the availability of surplus stocks. BAE Systems held a stock of Australian L119 light artillery guns which lacked sights and were not compatible with British Army ammunition. DE&S organised the fitting of sights and sourced ammunition from the US, bringing New Zealand military personnel to the UK to train Ukrainian soldiers to use the guns. Within four months of the invasion, 36 L119 guns had been supplied into Ukraine.

2.25 Alongside DE&S's contributions, the Defence Science and Technology Laboratory has also provided support to Operation Scorpius, drawing on its deep scientific and technical expertise. This work has included advice on vehicle armour protection, support for countering drone warfare, and camouflage, concealment and deception techniques.

Learning lessons from rapid procurement for Ukraine

2.26 DE&S is seeking to apply lessons from its acceleration of procurement under Operation Scorpius to its core business. For example, in March 2024 it introduced a 'gateway' model, similar to the one it has developed for Taskforce Kindred, to provide a single entry-point for its procurement on behalf of all four Front Line Commands. DE&S believes this will increase pace of delivery by enabling earlier engagement between military and procurement specialists.

2.27 DE&S regards some aspects of its efforts to accelerate procurement for Ukraine as being unique to that operation, however, and not capable of being adopted in its procurement for UK armed forces. One of the factors that has speeded up DE&S's procurement under Operation Scorpius has been a reduction in the extent to which military supplies have been tested for safety and effectiveness. While DE&S has increased the pace of delivery by assembling 'bespoke' weapons systems, often at speed from disparate sources, this can mean supplying systems that have not been subject to normal testing procedures. The MoD told us that Ukraine was prepared to accept equipment without the usual extent of safety checks, in order to enable very rapid deliveries. Under an agreement between the UK and Ukrainian governments, the liability for equipment malfunctions is transferred from manufacturers or the UK government, to the Ukrainian government, on delivery. This has protected the UK government from financial risk associated with equipment which has been rapidly procured, or donated from UK stockpiles. DE&S told us that as the relationship with Ukraine developed, more complex projects such as the development of bespoke systems needed specific liability agreements, which it was working to develop.

Delivering equipment to Ukraine

2.28 DE&S's logistics contractor Team Leidos delivers the majority of equipment provided by the UK to Ukrainian forces (at drop-off points, or 'Logistical Enablement Nodes', in Eastern Europe) using ferries and heavy lorries. DE&S told us that the deliveries, including both donations from UK stockpiles and equipment procured from UK-based suppliers, cost approximately £30 million per year (funded from the Reserve). Between spring 2022 and summer 2024, Team Leidos had made over 3,000 deliveries of equipment and ammunition for handover to the AFU. Team Leidos considers these efforts to be unprecedented in their scale and logistical complexity, including securing rapid permissions from other governments to move military freight across national borders, often at short notice. Between February 2022 and mid-July 2024 the Royal Air Force also flew 676 deliveries of equipment to a drop-off point in Eastern Europe for handover to the AFU.

2.29 Some deliveries require export permits from other governments. Where the MoD has procured weapons from abroad, it must seek permission from the nations where the manufacturers are based before re-exporting that equipment to a third country. For the US defence industry in particular, separate export permits can be required for component parts of a system or vehicle. DE&S's International and Industry Cooperation team is responsible for securing the necessary international permissions. DE&S would normally expect approval by the US State Department to take around 90 days, but told us that by working in partnership with US colleagues it has succeeded in reducing this to an average of 30 days.

Part Three

Training Ukrainian personnel

3.1 This Part sets out how the Ministry of Defence (MoD) and the UK armed forces (the British Army (Army), the Royal Navy (Navy) and the Royal Air Force (RAF)) have been helping to train new recruits and existing personnel for the Armed Forces of Ukraine (AFU). We cover:

- UK military training for Ukraine before 2022;
- international coordination of training since the start of the war;
- the UK training programmes provided to date and their development over time; and
- the impact of the main training programme, 'Operation Interflex', on training for UK armed forces.

UK military training for Ukraine before 2022

3.2 The UK was providing military training to Ukraine before the start of the current conflict in February 2022. Following Russia's annexation of Crimea in 2014, the UK launched 'Operation Orbital' to deliver non-lethal military training and build the capacity of the AFU. Between 2015 and February 2022, Operation Orbital trained 22,000 AFU personnel. The programme was initially delivered by 75 UK personnel, and increased to 100 in subsequent years, prior to the invasion.

3.3 Operation Orbital initially focused on training in medicine, logistics, general infantry skills and intelligence capacity building. The programme later expanded to include training in other areas including engineering, countering improvised explosive devices, defensive operations in urban environments, operational planning and countering attacks from snipers, armoured vehicles and mortars.²⁴ International allies, including the US, Canada, Denmark and Lithuania, supported the UK in providing training for the AFU. The MoD told us that this established relationship between the UK and Ukraine helped to build the foundation to set up a larger, UK-based training programme.

²⁴ Claire Mills, *Military assistance to Ukraine 2014-2021*, House of Commons Library, Research Briefing Number 7135, March 2022, pages 1-3 (accessed 17 May 2024).

International coordination of training for Ukraine

3.4 The UK's training programmes for Ukraine are part of a wider international effort on training, taking place in a range of locations through a coordinated international response involving 33 countries. Training is coordinated through two international organisations: the US-led Security Assistance Group for Ukraine (SAG-U) and the European Union Military Assistance Mission for Ukraine (EUMAM Ukraine). SAG-U works with the International Donors Coordination Centre (IDCC), which leads on equipment donations, and is responsible for coordinating military training across all partner nations in line with the demand for training from the AFU. EUMAM Ukraine is a programme with 24 EU member states and Norway contributing to the delivery of training.

3.5 SAG-U, which is based in Wiesbaden, Germany, and includes personnel from more than 22 countries, assesses AFU requests for training and decides which of the partner nations can deliver the requirements. The demand signal from the AFU also comes from joint training conferences in Germany, attended by both SAG-U and EUMAM. The training direction is set by the AFU and SAG-U has aimed to standardise the requirements for training courses delivered by different countries.

3.6 Up to the first quarter of 2024, the international coalition of countries had completed training for more than 123,000 Ukrainian soldiers since the war began in early 2022. The US military had trained approximately 21,000 soldiers from this total. As of May 2024, the EUMAM programme stated that it had trained 52,000 soldiers and as of July 2024, the UK had trained 42,050 soldiers under its main training programme, Operation Interflex.²⁵

UK military training programmes

3.7 The UK has provided several different types of training to Ukrainian forces (**Figure 10** overleaf). Operation Interflex is the largest programme, providing infantry training. As the war has continued, the UK has developed other, specialist programmes in response to demand from the AFU.

3.8 As well as training in battlefield skills, the UK training programmes have included some courses focused on the wellbeing and mental health of trainees. Operation Interbow trained 27 military chaplains for the AFU during 2023 and expects to train 45 more during 2024. Meanwhile, in response to demand from the AFU, the Army launched a course in early 2024 focused on mental health, for four groups of 10 trainees. The course enables trainees to recognise when their peers are showing signs of adverse mental health and point them to sources of support.

²⁵ The numbers trained by the EUMAM programme and Operation Interflex are from different data sources from the totals for the international coalition of countries and the US, so should not be directly compared with these. There is no single dataset allowing direct comparison of each country's contribution to the total training effort.

Figure 10

Training operations led by the UK since June 2022

The UK has led four major training operations in coalition with international partners

Training operation	Summary	Dates	Trainers	Numbers trained
Interflex	Basic infantry courses for recruits with little to no military experience, lower-rank leadership courses, (for example, for platoon commanders), and instructor courses to help sustain training within Ukraine.	June 2022 to present Currently in fifth tranche of participants.	British Army, working with trainers from partner nations	42,050 (July 2024)
Interbow	Specialist and individual courses including use of weapons supplied by the UK, such as the M270 multiple launch rocket system and AS-90 self-propelled artillery. Also medical training for combat life savers and medics, and chaplaincy courses in battlefield pastoral care.	February 2023 to present	British Army	Approximately 3,000 (May 2024)
Interforge	Marines training, towards building a Ukraine marine corps. Training moved from the UK to the Netherlands in February 2024.	February 2023 to June 2024	UK Royal Marines until February 2024. Dutch Marines and a small team of UK Royal Marines have provided the training since its transfer to the Netherlands	Approximately 1,000 (May 2024)
Interstorm	Elementary flying training and English language training for the Ukraine Air Force.	August 2023 to present	Royal Air Force	As of May 2024, more than 20 trainees had either completed or were undertaking the elementary flying course.

Source: National Audit Office analysis of Ministry of Defence documentation

Operation Interflex

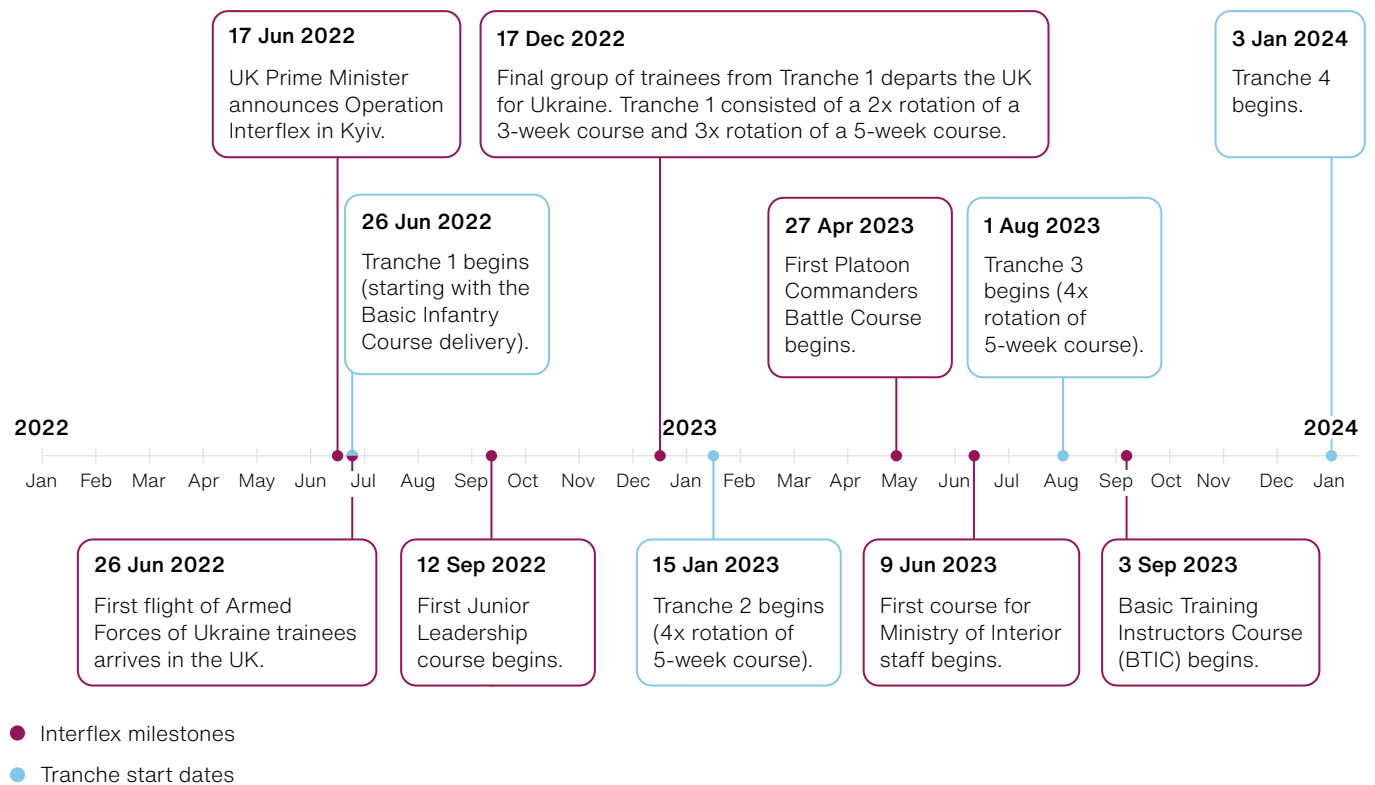
3.9 Operation Interflex is the largest UK training programme for Ukraine, focusing on training and equipping the AFU “at scale and at pace”. The Prime Minister announced the programme on 17 June 2022.²⁶ Ministers set Operation Interflex an initial target of training 10,000 troops by the end of 2022, with an ambition to train a further 20,000 by the end of 2023. The first flight of trainees arrived in the UK on 26 June 2022 (**Figure 11**). The target of 30,000 soldiers was achieved by November 2023, with a target to train a further 10,000 by July 2024.

²⁶ Prime Minister’s Office, “UK to offer major training programme for Ukrainian forces as Prime Minister hails their victorious determination”, 17 June 2022 (accessed 13 June 2024).

Figure 11

Interflex timeline, June 2022 to January 2024

Operation Interflex has developed more advanced courses over time



Source: National Audit Office analysis of Ministry of Defence documentation

3.10 UK military personnel deliver Interflex training, working with teams of trainers from 12 partner nations. The other countries involved are the Netherlands, Canada, Sweden, Finland, Norway, Denmark, Estonia, Lithuania, New Zealand, Romania, Kosovo and Australia. The Army uses its UK training sites to deliver the programme.

3.11 Army reservists have helped the full-time Army to deliver Operation Interflex. Army battalions have led the training and are supported by sub-units of reservists and international training partners. For example, 67% of the staff working at the 'handling and processing centre' (HAP) for trainees arriving from Ukraine are reservists belonging to the Army, Royal Navy and Royal Air Force. Reservists' work and personal commitments can mean it is difficult for the Army to use them at short notice.

3.12 Interflex provides a basic infantry training course for new recruits and more advanced courses for experienced personnel and selected recruits, including leadership courses and instructor training. The basic infantry course covers weapons handling, trench fighting, law of armed conflict, urban warfare, live firing practice and battle inoculation. In June 2023 Interflex also began delivering training for the Ukraine government’s Ministry of Interior (MOI) staff. MOI staff generally have more military experience than other trainees but take similar courses. The more advanced and specialist courses have been introduced in response to demand from the AFU, as Interflex has developed. Interflex has been delivered in four tranches of trainees since June 2022 (**Figure 12**) and the MoD has plans to train 10,000 more in ‘tranche 5’.

3.13 **Figure 13** shows the key stages of an Interflex trainee’s experience, from arrival in the UK to their departure for the Ukraine frontline. Trainees, in groups of 200, initially arrive at the HAP where they are provided with clothing and equipment and interviewed about their combat experience and motivations. They then depart for their training camp, elsewhere in the UK. Most trainees go through the basic infantry course lasting five weeks, and then return to the HAP for departure to Ukraine.

3.14 On completion of their course, trainees provide a self-assessment of their confidence in various aspects of warfare. For example, in ‘tranche 4’, 89% of trainees said that they felt they were better equipped to survive on the battlefield after the training. They also provide their assessment of how relevant each element of the course would be to the conditions they would face on the Ukrainian frontline. In ‘tranche 4’, 43% of trainees had previous combat experience. Feedback from trainees in ‘tranche 4’ suggested that some elements of the training could be more aligned with conditions in Ukraine. The MoD told us that it would drill down into the assessments given by trainees to understand how the delivery should be changed, and work with the AFU to develop the content.

Figure 12
Operation Interflex trainee numbers

The Ministry of Defence has aimed to train approximately 10,000 troops every six months

	Tranche 1 (Jun to Dec 2022)	Tranche 2 (Jan to Jul 2023)	Tranche 3 (Aug to Dec 2023)	Tranche 4 (Jan to Jul 2024)	Total trained (Jun 2022 to Jul 2024)
Numbers trained through Interflex	10,100	10,450	12,500	9,000	42,050

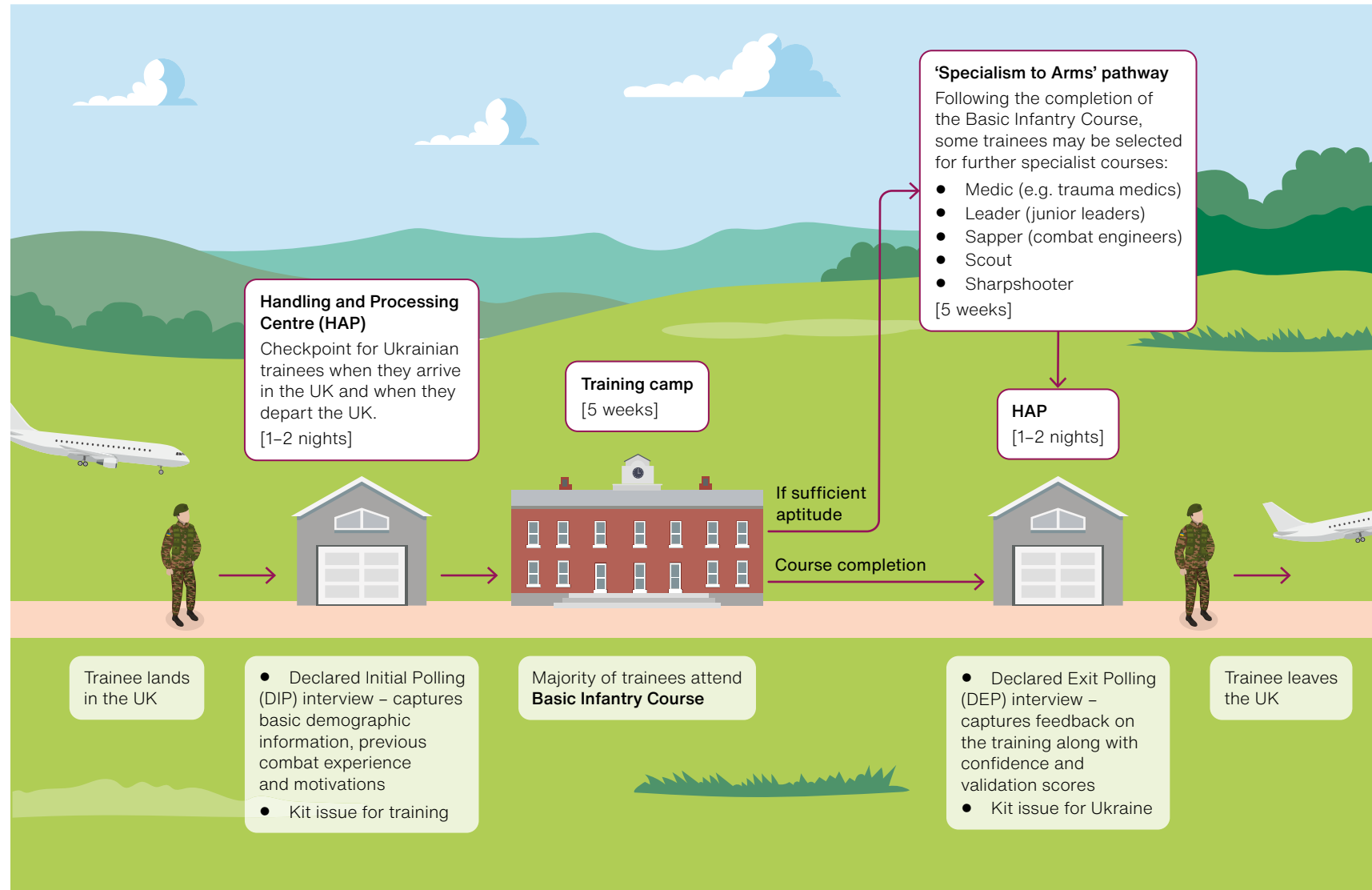
Note
1 All numbers are rounded to the nearest 50.

Source: National Audit Office analysis of Ministry of Defence documentation

Figure 13

A Ukrainian trainee's journey

Interflex trainees typically spend at least five weeks in the UK before going to the Ukrainian frontline



Source: National Audit Office summary of Ministry of Defence documentation

3.15 The Army has lengthened the basic infantry training course and developed its content since it was first launched in June 2022. The course was initially three weeks long, but the Army extended it to five weeks from the end of July 2022. The MoD told us it received feedback from the AFU that recruits needed more training in operating in urban environments and in weapons handling, since a lack of familiarity with live weapons was leading to some accidental discharges of weapons during active service. The longer course also included additional day-and-night combat training, medical training, grenade training, and live fire tactical training. Extending the training course to five weeks also increased the overall time taken to train an entire tranche of Ukrainian soldiers (approximately 10,000), from 120 days to 180 days, with associated increases in costs.

3.16 The AFU has made some requests for particular types of training which the Army has not been able to meet.

- **Training in countering or using drones:** Trainees have complained about a lack of drone training in the Interflex courses. The MoD told us that the UK currently provides limited drone training capabilities, owing to military and civil aviation restrictions and it was not currently possible to meet the full Ukrainian drone training requirement. The MoD is exploring ways to mitigate the shortfall.
- **Exercises involving vehicles driving over trainees' positions:** The Army has not included such activities, requested by the AFU, on safety grounds. The Army accepts that it is not able to meet the AFU's training requests in full, where this would involve what the Army considers an unacceptably high level of risk.

Impact of training provision for UK armed forces

3.17 Interflex is taking up more than a quarter of the Army's training estate, reducing the capacity of the UK armed forces to maintain their own training programmes.

- British Army units which bid for time at the training sites in 2023 had their bids rejected at eight times the rate in 2019 (a 'normal' year for training site usage, preceding both the Ukraine conflict and the COVID-19 pandemic), because the sites were not available. The MoD does not monitor whether units are able to rebook their training sessions if their initial bids to use training sites are rejected. The MoD has acknowledged that Interflex will constrain the British army's capacity to train its own soldiers. The Army will continue to deliver Interflex through 2024, working with international partners and the Army Reserve to mitigate the impact of supporting Ukraine on UK forces.
- 'Operation Interforge', the specialist programme for training Ukrainian marine forces, was moved to the Netherlands in February 2024. The MoD told us that the use of training facilities in the UK was threatening to compromise the Royal Marines' own training needs. A small team of UK personnel went to the Netherlands to help Dutch trainers continue to deliver the programme.

Appendix One

Our investigative approach

Scope

1 We conducted an investigation into the Ministry of Defence's (MoD's) support for Ukraine since Russia's invasion in February 2022. This report aims to:

- provide a record of the MoD's contribution to Ukraine's war effort;
- describe how the MoD is assuring itself that support to Ukraine is delivered effectively;
- enhance parliamentary scrutiny of the MoD's investment in replenishing the UK's own military stocks;
- clarify the sources of MoD funding for Ukraine; and
- set out the wider impacts of the MoD's support to Ukraine.

2 Our report sets out the facts about the MoD's actions in support of Ukraine. We have not sought to evaluate the value for money of the MoD's work. 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.

3 This report sets out the facts about:

- the scope of the MoD's support for Ukraine;
- the cost of this support from February 2022 to March 2025; and
- the structures and processes the MoD uses to manage its support to Ukraine.

Methods

4 We conducted our fieldwork between January and May 2024.

5 We interviewed key officials from the MoD to understand the ways in which the department is supporting Ukraine, how this support is organised, how it has changed over the course of the war, and the impacts on the UK's military readiness. Those we interviewed included:

- officials responsible for coordinating policies and programmes relating to Ukraine;
- officials responsible for procuring equipment and coordinating with other countries' efforts;
- military personnel involved in training Ukrainian troops; and
- officials in finance; and senior officials with oversight of how support for Ukraine fits into the MoD's broader priorities.

We additionally interviewed officials from HM Treasury about the financial management of the MoD's activities.

6 We based our questioning on our key audit questions, which sought to establish the facts behind the MoD's support for Ukraine. These included the history of the MoD's support since February 2022, as well as the organisation, type and costs of this support.

7 We conducted 18 interviews over the fieldwork period. These were a mix of face-to-face and remoted interviews carried out over Microsoft Teams. We selected interviewees based on recommendations from our MoD contacts, selected in line with our study questions. We selected others during our fieldwork in response to new information.

8 The data we obtained from interviews were used to inform our requests for documents and further interviews from the MoD. We also used the data as part of our evidence base for the findings of the report.

Document review

9 We reviewed published and unpublished documents from the MoD to understand the kind of support that the MoD has provided to Ukraine, the decisions it has taken in supporting Ukraine, how it has organised its efforts, and how these activities are affecting the UK's military preparedness. These documents included:

- ministerial submissions seeking permission to proceed with procurement decisions;
- diagrams detailing the organisation of MoD's activities;
- financial extracts calculating the value of equipment provided;
- internal approvals for budget and spending activities;
- terms of reference for task forces and teams established as part of the MoD's support;
- internal audit documentation reviewing the MoD's financial controls over its activity in support of Ukraine; and
- papers detailing the MoD's plans for replenishing the equipment it has provided to Ukraine.

We reviewed documents between February and June 2024. We tagged the documents with the area of the report to which they related, and we extracted information relevant to the study questions which we used in the report. We also made use of team discussions to identify emerging findings following our review of documents.

Fieldwork visits

10 During our fieldwork, we conducted several site visits to witness the kinds of support the MoD was providing to Ukraine. These included:

- a site where Ukrainian recruits were receiving training from UK military instructors;
- a 'handling and processing centre' (HAP) where Ukrainian recruits are provided with equipment before starting their training;
- an Army-organised conference to review the results of the UK's training effort for Ukraine so far; and
- MoD warehouses where equipment of the type granted to Ukraine is stored.

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