

NATO member states on arms deliveries to Ukraine

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The NATO member states do not have a common position concerning sending arms supplies to Ukraine. In January, under increasing military pressure from Russia, it was the US, the UK, the Baltic states, the Czech Republic and Poland which decided to deliver weapons and ammunition to Kyiv free of charge. Apart from being a political demonstration of solidarity, these supplies are intended to show to Russia that further military actions against Ukraine will incur increased costs. Moreover, these deliveries will strengthen Ukrainian ground forces if the Russian military operation in Donbass is expanded, but will not play a major role in the event of a full-scale invasion or missile attacks on Ukraine. Germany and some other member states are still rejecting arms supplies to Ukraine due to the fear of a further deterioration of the relations with Moscow.

In addition to the continued US support, commercial sales to Ukraine from several NATO member states have been pursued in recent years, which has contributed to the strengthening of Ukraine's military potential. The most significant support of the Ukrainian ground forces came with the deliveries of post-Soviet armaments and military equipment from NATO's eastern flank countries. The restoration of the Ukrainian navy has been conducted with support mainly from Turkey and the UK, but with limited impact on its combat potential. The self-imposed restrictions have also been applied on commercial deliveries stemming from the fear of increasing tensions between the West and Russia.

The US arms deliveries

Since 2014, the United States has provided the biggest share of matériel assistance to Ukraine. Deliveries have been covered by the government-to-government Foreign Military Sales (FMS) system and funded mostly either by the State Department's Foreign Military Financing or the Defence Department's Ukraine Security Assistance Initiative (see Appendix). According to official data, the US has committed over \$2.7 billion for training and equipment to the Ukrainian armed forces since 2014.¹

However, Washington has been cautious about delivering weapons and ammunition to Ukraine in part due to fears of an escalation of the Russian-Ukrainian conflict and providing Moscow with an excuse to expand its military activities in Donbass, and also due to the need to cooperate with Russia in other

¹ 'U.S. Security Cooperation with Ukraine', U.S. Department of State, 20 January 2022, state.gov.

areas. In the US discussions after 2014, concerns were also raised about sending armaments and military equipment to Ukraine that would require a greater training commitment, thus turning the Russian-Ukrainian conflict into a Russian-US proxy war. Furthermore, the Obama administration aimed for a common stance with the European allies (mainly Germany) which opposed weapons deliveries. This policy evolved under Trump, when free of charge light weapons and ammunition were for the first time sent to Kyiv, albeit in a very limited scope. The Biden administration has recently increased these deliveries, though they are limited to short-range defensive arms. They will help the Ukrainian ground forces in the event of a Russian military offensive in Donbass, but will be of limited use in the event of a large-scale invasion and will play no role against Russian long-range missile attacks.

Under the Obama administration, free of charge government-to-government deliveries were limited to non-lethal support, although

” The US provides the largest matériel support to Ukraine, but remains cautious on the supply of arms and ammunition.

Ukraine also received permits for small arms purchases via direct commercial sales.² Under the FMS Washington began supplying body armour, vehicles (including 230 Humvees), night and thermal vision equipment, heavy engineering equipment, advanced radios, patrol boats, rations, tents, counter-mortar radars, uniforms and first aid equipment.³ Broader support for Ukraine was advocated by Congress as early as 2014 in the Ukraine Freedom Support Act that authorised the president to provide anti-tank and anti-armour weapons to Ukraine (among others).⁴ The Obama administration did not take advantage of this opportunity. At the same time, it started to provide training to the Ukrainian Armed Forces along with the UK, Canada, Poland and Lithuania.⁵

The Trump administration began cautiously to change this policy from late 2017. Washington expanded the supply of non-lethal military assistance and allowed for lethal arms deliveries, albeit on a limited scale. In December 2017, approval was given for the largest post-2014 direct commercial sales to Ukraine (sniper rifles) worth \$41 million.⁶ In 2018, the administration decided to transfer 210 Javelin anti-tank missiles with 39 launchers for \$47 million, and a year later to send another 150 missiles with 10 launchers for \$39 million.⁷ In 2019, deliveries of 5 former US Coast Guard Island-class patrol boats began, with the Biden administration transferring another 2 units. In 2020 Washington also agreed to provide Kyiv with Mark VI patrol boats, funded both by the US and Ukraine.⁸

The Biden administration delivered on previously agreed contracts and provided further non-lethal assistance in two tranches in 2021 (\$125 million and \$150 million). Additional military aid worth \$60m was granted in August 2021, ahead of President Volodymyr Zelensky's visit to Washington. Deliveries – this time of small arms and ammunition – took place in December 2021. Increased Russian military activity along Ukraine's borders, combined with the Kremlin's demands for a revision of the European security order, led Washington to send further supplies of arms and ammunition (including Javelins) worth \$200 million to Ukraine, shipped in January and February this year. In total, in 2021

² P.J. Marzalik, A. Toler, 'Lethal Weapons to Ukraine: A Primer', Atlantic Council, 26 January 2018, atlanticcouncil.org.

³ 'U.S. Assistance to Ukraine', The White House, 21 November 2014, obamawhitehouse.archives.gov.

⁴ *Ukraine Freedom Support Act of 2014*, 18 December 2014, govinfo.gov.

⁵ 'Wielonarodowa Grupa Szkoleniowa na Ukrainie', Polska Zbrojna, 17 September 2019, polska-zbrojna.pl; 'JMTG-U', U.S. European Command, eucom.mil.

⁶ J. Rogin, 'Trump administration approves lethal arms sales to Ukraine', Washington Post, 20 December 2017, washingtonpost.com.

⁷ 'Ukraine – Javelin Missiles and Command Launch Units', DSCA, 1 March 2018, dsca.mil; 'Ukraine – Javelin Missiles and Command Launch Units', *idem*, 3 October 2019.

⁸ 'Ukraine – Mark VI Patrol Boats', *idem*, 17 June 2020.

US deliveries of armaments and military equipment to Kyiv reached \$650 million.⁹ The transfer of five Mi-17 helicopters from the Defense Department's¹⁰ inventories is planned.

European military assistance

After 2014, free of charge non-lethal military assistance was also provided to Ukraine by European NATO member states. The deliveries of weapons and ammunition were rarely publicised. A different tactic was adopted by Lithuania, which announced the transfer of equipment, followed by weapons and ammunition, to Kyiv, in an attempt to change the attitude of the West European allies. The Lithuanian deliveries were small, though – with a total value of €6 million in 2014–2021.¹¹

In late 2021 and early 2022, in the face of growing Russian military pressure on Ukraine, a group of

” Arms supplies from the European allies are in line with the conservative US line.

European NATO members (the UK, Lithuania, Estonia and Latvia, the Czech Republic and Poland) decided to send larger free of charge shipments of weapons and ammunition to Ukraine. Other NATO countries, including Denmark, have also declared their readiness to do so. This assistance has so far been in line with the US support outlined above. The deliveries encompass short-range defensive anti-tank (Javelin, NLAW) and air defence systems (Stinger, Grom) with ammunition.¹²

The most decisive move came from London, which in January 2022 transferred 2,000 NLAW short-range anti-tank weapons with ammunition to Kyiv.¹³ The UK thus became a forerunner among the large European NATO member states in terms of weapons deliveries to the Ukrainian land forces. The shipments fit into the wider British-Ukrainian military cooperation, which increased after 2017.¹⁴ The UK has been engaged in the training of the Ukrainian Armed Forces and in military exercises in Ukraine. It has also engaged in armament cooperation with Kyiv (see below). This is in line with the UK's perception of threats and challenges and its role in international politics. London sees Russia as the biggest threat to the Euro-Atlantic area. After leaving the EU it wants to play the role of a leading European member of NATO and an active ally of the US, supporting and complementing US actions on the international stage.¹⁵

The Baltic states announced their recent weapons supplies to Ukraine with fanfare, even if these supplies were relatively small. This is in line with their activism in security policy aimed at mobilising the West European allies to develop a more robust stance on Russia. In pursuit of this, Estonia announced the transfers of anti-tank Javelin missiles, and Latvia and Lithuania announced the shipments of Stinger air defence systems (all of which they had received from the US in previous years). In addition, Estonia wants to deliver to Kyiv 9 D-30 towed howitzers dating from the 1960s but still used by the Ukrainian army. Tallinn is applying for permits to re-export them both in Finland, from where they were purchased in 2009, as well as in Berlin, which sold them to Helsinki from the stocks of the former East German army.

⁹ D. Shivaram, '90 tons of U.S. military aid arrives in Ukraine as border tensions with Russia rise', NPR, 22 January 2022, [npr.org](https://www.npr.org).

¹⁰ U.S. planning to transfer Mi-17 military helicopters to Ukraine', *Ukrinform*, 22 January 2022, ukrinform.net.

¹¹ Lithuania donated: field rations and medical supplies, spare parts, body armour vests, tactical belts, machine guns and automatic rifles and anti-tank weapons with ammunition, as well as decommissioned L-39ZA aircraft. See 'Ukraine's fight is our fight, says Minister A. Anušauskas in Kyiv', Ministry of National Defence Republic of Lithuania, 8 December 2021, kam.lt.

¹² S. Cranny-Evans, 'What Do UK Weapons Deliveries Add to Ukraine's Armed Forces?', *RUSI*, 21 January 2022, rusi.org.

¹³ B. Wallace, 'Statement by the Defence Secretary in the House of Commons, 17 January 2022', gov.uk.

¹⁴ Between 2015 and 2017, British material support to Ukraine, worth £2.2 million, mainly included medical and personal protective equipment. In addition, London sold Kyiv at a low price 75 used Saxon wheeled armoured personnel carriers from the British Army reserves (and other items).

¹⁵ P. Szymański, 'The UK's Integrated Review and NATO's north-eastern flank', *OSW Commentary*, no. 396, 10 June 2021, osw.waw.pl.

Ukraine has also received considerable support from Central European countries. In January the Czech government decided to donate 4,000 artillery shells for the DANA 152 mm self-propelled gun-howitzers.¹⁶ At the beginning of February Poland announced its readiness to supply different kinds of ammunition and artillery shells, man-portable short-range air defence systems Grom, light mortars and reconnaissance drones.¹⁷

Commercial sales and armaments cooperation

After 2017 commercial sales of armaments and military equipment to Kyiv increased; this was partly accompanied by broader arms cooperation.

The purchase of weapons and military equipment from NATO's eastern flank countries, mainly Poland and the Czech Republic, played a significant role in strengthening

” The purchase of arms and ammunition from NATO's eastern flank countries has played the most significant role in strengthening the combat capabilities of Ukrainian ground forces.

the Ukrainian ground forces. Kyiv purchased both new and post-Soviet military equipment which met the current needs of the Ukrainian Armed Forces. Polish companies supplied loitering munitions and mini reconnaissance drones,¹⁸ Oncilla wheeled armoured vehicles,¹⁹ 54 MT-LB armoured personnel carriers, grenade launchers and mortars, pistols and rifles and ammunition.²⁰ The value of export of Polish armaments and military equipment to Ukraine between 2014 and 2020 amounted to €122 million.²¹ Partially modernised post-Soviet equipment was also delivered. Some of the transfers (from the stocks of the Czech army) were carried out in cooperation between Czech and Polish firms. After 2017, 46 BMP-1 infantry fighting vehicles²² and 33 used 2S1 Goździk self-propelled howitzers were sold to Ukraine.²³ The Czech company sent additional 37 infantry fighting vehicles²⁴ and 16 howitzers²⁵ of the type mentioned, and in 2020 signed a contract to sell 26 Dana-M2 self-propelled howitzers with ammunition. Czech Tatra Trucks chassis for Ukrainian Neptun ground-based anti-ship missile systems²⁶ have also been delivered. Overall, the Czech arms exports to Ukraine between 2014 and 2020 were worth €48 million.²⁷ Weapons and ammunition (including grenade launchers, rifles) were also sold to Kyiv by companies from Bulgaria and Slovakia, but the scale of these operations is difficult to estimate.

In recent years, Turkey has intensified armaments cooperation with Ukraine. This collaboration developed in line with Turkish ambitions to pursue a multi-vector policy, to strengthen its presence in the Black Sea region and to modernise its own arms industry and armed forces. The possibility of improving Turkey's position in NATO and as regards Russia (with Ukraine being a part of a complex

¹⁶ See further K. Dębiec, 'Czechy w awangardzie wsparcia dla Ukrainy', OSW, 28 January 2022, osw.waw.pl.

¹⁷ 'Zestawy GROM, drony i moździerz. Premier wymienia, co Polska przekaże Ukrainie', Dziennik Gazeta Prawna, 1 February 2022, gospodarka.dziennik.pl.

¹⁸ *Sprawozdanie Zarządu z działalności Grupy Kapitałowej WB Electronics S.A. za 2020 rok*, 21 May 2021, p. 23, wbgroup.pl.

¹⁹ J. Reszczyński, 'Oncilla poszła na wojnę', Defence24, 28 May 2021, defence24.pl.

²⁰ See arms export and import reports for 2019 and 2020 provided by Ukraine to the United Nations Register of Conventional Arms, unroca.org.

²¹ Data from the *Eksport uzbrojenia i sprzętu wojskowego z Polski* reports issued by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Poland.

²² B. Kucharski, 'Eks-czeskie BMP-1AK dla Sił Zbrojnych Ukrainy po remoncie', ZBIAM, 27 March 2021, zbiam.pl.

²³ J. Sabak, 'Czeskie Goździki dotarły na Ukrainę', Defence24, 23 July 2018, defence24.pl.

²⁴ 'Ukraine receives refurbished BMP-1 IFVs from Czech Republic', Defense Brief, 9 April 2020, defbrief.com.

²⁵ A. Pawłowski, 'Ukraina ponownie kupiła czeskie Goździki', 24 September 2019, konflikty.pl.

²⁶ 'Czech howitzers and Tatra trucks for Ukraine', Czech Defence Journal, 7 June 2021, czdjournal.com.

²⁷ *Annual report on export control of military material, small arms for civil use, and dual-use goods and technologies in the Czech Republic in 2020*, Ministry of Industry and Trade, mpo.cz.

Turkish-Russian relationship based on strategic competition and cooperation) was an additional factor.²⁸ In effect, Ukraine became a supplier of engines for Turkish unmanned aerial vehicles (etc.) and in return received the opportunity to acquire Turkish armed drones. In 2019 Kyiv signed a contract to purchase 12 Bayraktar TB2s along with ammunition for \$69 million.²⁹ Drones were used in Donbass last autumn, which caused Russia to protest.³⁰ Further agreements on military-technical cooperation were concluded in 2020. On the basis of these, a Turkish-Ukrainian joint venture will produce an additional 24–48 drones³¹ for Kyiv. The bilateral programme also foresees the construction of two Ada-class corvettes for the Ukrainian navy (construction of the first began in September 2021).³²

Broader arms cooperation with Kyiv is also being developed by the United Kingdom. If the bilateral

” The UK is likely to become Ukraine’s main partner in rebuilding and modernising the Ukrainian navy.

agreement ratified at the end of January 2022 by Ukraine’s parliament is implemented,³³ the UK will become the main partner in rebuilding and modernising the Ukrainian navy. Kyiv plans to acquire 8 missile boats, 6 of which will be built locally, and 2 Sandown-type mine destroyers (the first to be delivered by the end of this year). For this purpose, Ukraine received a ten-year loan of £1.7 billion guaranteed by UK Export Finance.³⁴ With British support, Ukraine will also build two new naval bases. The cooperation programme is envisaged as long-term and will not quickly strengthen Ukrainian maritime capabilities. Kyiv is grateful, even if the UK is not ready to sell Ukraine naval weapon systems that would significantly strengthen the Ukrainian navy’s combat potential.

Some other NATO countries that have been wary of commercial military sales to Kyiv, are equipping services subordinated to the Ukrainian interior ministry. France signed a contract in 2018 for the sale of 55 helicopters for the police, border guards and emergency services³⁵ and, in 2019, for the delivery of 20 patrol boats, five of which will be built locally.³⁶ Denmark wants to develop a similar cooperation – in December 2021 a memorandum was signed envisioning the construction of search and rescue vessels for the Ukrainian coast guard³⁷ with the participation of Ukrainian shipyards.

Germany – the unwilling ally

Berlin has opposed the supply of weapons to Kyiv. Nor has it taken part in military training and exercises conducted under the US umbrella in Ukraine. Germany is convinced that there is “no military solution” to the situation in Donbass. It fears intensified Russian military actions against Ukraine and transforming the conflict into a proxy war between Russia and the West should there be larger Western arms deliveries. Berlin also sees itself as an intermediary between Russia and Ukraine in the Normandy format. According to German politicians, a decision to deliver arms to Kyiv would undermine this role. Additionally, *The Federal Government’s 2019 Political Guidelines for the Export of Armaments and Military Equipment*³⁸ are often cited in the German discussions. According to

²⁸ A. Stein, *Turkey’s Response to the Russia-Ukraine Crisis*, Foreign Policy Research Institute, 12 January 2022, fpri.org.

²⁹ Y. Lapaiev, ‘Ukraine Buys Advanced Turkish Strike Drones’, The Jamestown Foundation, 6 February 2019, jamestown.org.

³⁰ ‘Ukraine uses Turkish drones in Donbass conflict zone, Putin tells Erdogan’, Reuters, 3 December 2021, reuters.com.

³¹ ‘Ukraine launches production of Bayraktar drones – Yermak’, Ukrinform, 25 December 2021, ukrinform.net.

³² B. Ege Bekdil, ‘Ukrainian official reveals number of Ada-class corvettes on order from Turkey’, Defense News, 28 July 2021, defensenews.com.

³³ ‘Parliament ratified Ukrainian-British agreement on development of Ukrainian Navy capabilities’, Ministry of Defence of Ukraine, 27 January 2022, mil.gov.ua.

³⁴ C. Mills, *Military Assistance to Ukraine*, UK Parliament, 1 February 2022, commonslibrary.parliament.uk.

³⁵ ‘Ukraine signs deal with France to buy 55 Airbus helicopters’, Reuters, 23 March 2018, reuters.com.

³⁶ ‘OCEA launches Ukraine’s first fast patrol boat 98’, Shephard, 10 December 2021, shephardmedia.com.

³⁷ ‘A consortium of Danish companies will build multi-purpose vessels in Ukraine at the Ukrainian shipyards’, Embassy of Ukraine to the Kingdom of Denmark, 20 December 2021, denmark.mfa.gov.ua.

³⁸ *Politische Grundsätze der Bundesregierung für den Export von Kriegswaffen und sonstigen Rüstungsgütern*, Federal Ministry for Economic Affairs and Climate Action, 26 June 2019, bmwi.de.

this document export permits should not be issued to countries that are involved in armed conflicts, unless they are acting upon the right to individual or collective self-defence under Article 51 of the UN Charter. However, Ukraine's right to self-defence is rarely mentioned in German debates. Overall, Berlin's stance on arms deliveries to Kyiv is also ingrained in the widespread belief in Germany that Europe's security can only be built together with Moscow.

This restrictive policy was pursued by Chancellor Angela Merkel with support from all political parties. In 2021, a new tone appeared in the German debate. The expert community became more critical of the rigid position and rhetoric of the MFA.³⁹ Kyiv also started to stoke the German-domestic discussions by beginning to harshly criticise Berlin. In December 2021, the Ukrainian defence minister openly accused Germany of blocking arms deliveries to Ukraine by the NATO Support and Procurement Organisation.⁴⁰ In consequence, the new chairman of the CDU, Friedrich Merz, expressed his support for limited defensive arms supplies to Kyiv. The chairwoman of the Defence Committee in the Bundestag (from the FDP) took a similar position, albeit one not shared by her party.

However, there is no indication that the coalition formed by the SPD, the Greens and the FDP will change the restrictive stance in-

” There is no indication that Germany will change its restrictive stance on arms supplies to Ukraine even under heavy pressure.

herited upon taking power. This is linked not only to Germany's Russia policy, but also to the wider scepticism of the Green Party that wants to curb German arms exports, which totalled a record €9.35 billion in 2021. The coalition has thus planned to tighten control in this area, including through a new arms exports control law.⁴¹ Moreover, the restrictive stance of the Social Democrats on this issue, agreed at the beginning of February, leads to the assumption that there will not be any changes to the current German policy. Germany will not deliver or allow for the export or re-export of German weapons to Ukraine, including the transfer of nine old howitzers from Estonia. The construction of a modern field hospital, financed by Germany with Estonian personnel offering relevant training to Ukrainian Armed Forces, is one of the few supporting measures that Berlin has been ready to provide.⁴² However, after a wave of criticism of its rigid approach, in January Berlin announced the delivery of 5,000 helmets to Kyiv. It is possible that Germany will extend this type of support in the future.

In addition to Germany, some other NATO member states – such as Norway (or the non-aligned Finland) – are also cautious about supplying arms to Ukraine, treating this type of assistance as countering diplomatic solutions. The Netherlands was among those which had also maintained a critical stance to supplies, but it changed its mind early this year.

The impact on the Ukrainian Armed Forces

The post-2014 deliveries of armaments and military equipment have made up for the losses suffered by the Ukrainian Armed Forces in Donbass. The post-Soviet weapons, equipment and ammunition coming from former users on NATO's eastern flank has contributed to maintaining relatively low-intensity military operations by the Ukrainian ground in the current conflict zone.

The volume of the new armaments and military equipment that Kyiv so far received from the United States, the United Kingdom, Turkey and Poland is too small. It will at most allow Ukraine to counter

³⁹ D. Minzarari, S. Stewart, *Die Logik von Verteidigungshilfe für die Ukraine*, SWP, 12 August 2021, swp-berlin.org.

⁴⁰ R. Olearchyk, B. Hall, 'Ukraine blames Germany for 'blocking' Nato weapons supply', Financial Times, 12 December 2021, ft.com.

⁴¹ 'Neuer Rekordwert bei Rüstungsexporten', Tagesschau, 18 January 2022, tagesschau.de.

⁴² 'New milestones for defence-related cooperation between Germany and Estonia', Ministry of Defence Republic of Estonia, 20 July 2021, kaitseministeerium.ee.

only a short-term increase in the intensity of clashes in Donbass. Furthermore, recent deliveries are mainly limited to light weapons. The scope, scale and pace of the westernisation of armaments and military equipment to date have not brought about qualitative changes in the Ukrainian Armed Forces. The only exception in terms of the scale of deliveries and their significance is the Polish-Ukrainian cooperation with regard to the propulsion of engines of all types of anti-tank missiles currently manufactured in Ukraine – they are powered by solid propellants produced in Poland.⁴³

APPENDIX

Primary US assistance to Ukraine in fiscal years 2015–2022 (allocations, in millions of dollars)⁴⁴

	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021*	2022**
Department of State / USAID	361.80	667.00	454.30	421.80	445.60	447.00	463.55	458.90
of which Foreign Military Financing	47.00	85.00	99.00	95.00	115.00	115.00	115.00	115.00
Department of Defense / Ukraine Security Assistance Initiative (USAI)		226.53	148.63	195.45	214.80	256.70	275.00	250.00

* planned appropriations were increased in 2021 by \$60 million in August, and then by \$200 million in December

** request

⁴³ See e.g. 'Польская MESKO S. A. поможет "Укроборонпрому" наладить современное серийное производство пороха и ракетного топлива', *Interfax Ukraine*, 6 September 2018, interfax.com.ua.

⁴⁴ CRS Report *Ukraine: Background, Conflict with Russia, and U.S. Policy*, Congressional Research Service, 5 October 2021, p. 32, crsreports.congress.gov.