

Britain keeps selling off old military equipment - it should go to Ukraine

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"Our positions are 100 metres away from the enemy. We are being bombarded by everything: [cluster bombs](#), phosphorus, artillery. The ratio of our fire to that of the enemy is approximately 1 to 50. We need everything we can."

These words said to me by a female soldier fighting on the frontlines against Russia in Donbas show the [desperate situation facing the Ukrainian armed forces](#) two years into Russia's full-scale invasion - and the urgent need for the UK to meet its promises to Ukraine.

A significant package of military aid is available in the UK's arsenal that, if released, could potentially have a major impact in ending the malaise. These resources have been confirmed by parliamentary disclosures to questions raised by Labour MPs.

Since the start of [Russia's invasion](#), the Ministry of Defence has sold off more than 1,000 unwanted military vehicles. The list includes 74 Bulldog armoured personnel carriers, 134 reconnaissance vehicles, and 63 MAN support vehicles, 48 Pinzgauer trucks, and an array of other logistics vehicles, trailers, transporters and quad bikes, as well as 46 fixed-wing aircraft, including attack aircraft and transport planes.

That is a significant resource that could have been donated to fighting Russians on the frontline, rather than filling up sales and auctions lists.

[Labour MP Clive Lewis](#) on Tuesday tabled an Early Day Motion calling on the Government to send retired equipment to Ukraine and to recognise "that the UK must play a part in organising an urgent increase in aid to enable Ukrainians to free their entire country" and send this equipment. The call was endorsed by the Confederation of Free Trade Unions of Ukraine. Alex Rennie, Conservative leader of Havant Council and head of UK Friends of Ukraine, echoed this, saying the "UK should not be selling off equipment that could be used as military aid to support Ukraine in its fight for the liberation of its land".

Lewis previously tabled a motion to Parliament last year, demanding all surplus equipment be offered to Ukraine, with support from both the SNP and DUP MPs. The demand was raised again by Nadia Whittome MP during a debate the first anniversary of the invasion. But the Government has taken no action.

One example revealed by Lewis and McDonnell is the [selling-off of FV107 Scimitar reconnaissance vehicles](#), a battle-hardened light tank used in Iraq and Afghanistan. Early in the conflict, the UK promised to donate 23 Scimitar tanks to Ukraine, but so far has failed to send any. Instead, 18 have already been sold off to undisclosed buyers via the Defence Equipment Sales Agency.

With military hardware being sold off, rather than donated to Ukraine's war effort, volunteers including the Ukraine Solidarity Campaign have been filling gaps.

Our campaign raises money to buy 4x4 vehicles and volunteers to drive them over 1,000km. Imagine our upset to learn that the MoD has sold 182 military Land Rovers, similar to those we buy with donated funds.

Of course, the UK has contributed large amounts of military aid since the start of the full-scale invasion. On 8 March, Defence Secretary Grant Schapps confirmed that he would be purchasing 10,000 drones to donate to Ukraine.

But as the war continues, and right-wing politicians in Europe and the US threaten to withdraw support for Ukraine, there is much more the UK could and should be doing. Last January, [the UK donated 14 Challenger 2 tanks](#).

[With the MoD planning to upgrade only 148 of its 213 Challengers](#), will the remaining 63 be sold off or sent to protect soldiers on Ukraine's front lines? There are 83 Scimitar light tanks still available after the MoD sale, and plans to retire the Army's mainstay, the 625 Warrior infantry fighting vehicles, meaning hundreds could be sent to Ukraine instead of the scrapyard.

The UK has trained Ukrainian pilots, but could also donate unwanted early versions of Typhoon combat aircraft. The parliamentary disclosure shows [26 are scheduled to leave service by March next year](#). Yet the Defence Secretary says there are [no plans to donate fixed wing aircraft to Ukraine](#). Instead, these Typhoons will be stripped of useable spare parts. Nine Chinook helicopters set to be retired from the UK armed forces could go to Ukraine. The volunteers I work with to scrape together funds for second-hand pickup trucks are asking: why not?

The questions asked by Lewis and McDonnell reveal a worrying trend and a self-limiting approach to the conflict that harms Ukrainian soldiers struggling on the frontlines, and endangers us all.

Back on the frontlines, an officer known as Phoenix told me "the availability of these types of weapons and equipment, both at the tactical and operational-strategic levels, will make it possible to have an advantage on the battlefield and, in the end, to win faster than without it, avoiding greater costs than we will have relying only on ourselves. And we must remember that by doing so we are saving Europe from further Russian invasion."

We need a radical shift from the practice of providing just enough aid to resist Russia to providing enough for Ukraine to win the war and liberate their country. That starts with donating our military hardware, not selling it off to the highest bidder.

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