

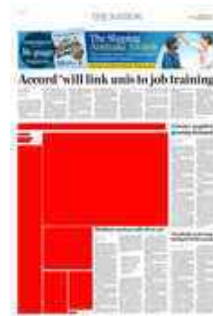
Give Ukraine what it needs to beat Putin: Forrest

By GEOFF CHAMBERS CHIEF POLITICAL CORRESPONDENT

The Australian

Tuesday 27th February 2024

Page 5 | Section: THE NATION
952cm on the page



Give Ukraine what it needs to beat Putin: Forrest

GEOFF CHAMBERS
CHIEF POLITICAL
CORRESPONDENT

EXCLUSIVE

Billionaire miner and philanthropist Andrew Forrest says Australia should not keep armoured vehicles, fighter jets, tanks and helicopters locked-up in “warehouses” when Kyiv urgently needs military firepower to push back Russian forces.

Dr Forrest, who on Tuesday will announce a \$5m commitment to remove landmines from agricultural land in Ukraine, said the Australian Defence Force must “support (Ukraine) every possible way we can”.

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky, who has met Mr Forrest on several occasions, including earlier this month at the Munich Security Conference, has called on Western allies to increase military aid to keep the fight going against Vladimir Putin.

Since Russia invaded Ukraine in 2022, Ukrainian officials and diplomats have requested access to Australian Hawkei armoured vehicles, MRH-90 Taipan helicopters, F/A-18 Hornet fighter jets and Abrams tanks.

“I absolutely think it’s a total waste of time to keep any ammunition and equipment in warehouses in Australia when it’s needed for the very thing which our defence forces stand for, which is to stand for democracy and our values,” Dr Forrest, who has committed to a \$735m post-war fund to

help rebuild Ukraine, told The Australian.

“That’s what the people of Ukraine are fighting for right now. Let’s make sure we support them every possible way we can.”

Amid renewed calls by Kyiv for Australia to deliver a humanitarian shipment of thermal coal, Dr Forrest said he wasn’t across the coal requests but backed ongoing support via generators to help Ukraine “improve their resilience for energy generation”.

Minderoo Foundation has supplied more than 170 power generators to Ukraine. “When the Ukrainian people and government ask for help, they’re really serious. They’re on the frontlines of democracy and freedom so let’s help them,” he said.

Dr Forrest, who via the Minderoo Foundation co-chaired with Nicola Forrest is increasing aid commitment to Ukraine to almost \$14m, also issued a call to arms for business leaders and philanthropists. “I’d like to see people who admire democracy and freedom come together now to support Ukraine,” he said. “It’s autocracy versus democracy. The best way to support Putin is not supporting Ukraine. So let’s get in and support the people of Ukraine.”

Ukraine’s ambassador to Australia, Vasyl Myroshnychenko, who will speak at the National Press Club on Wednesday, said “assistance should not be exclusively in the realm of foreign aid or governments”. “Philanthropy and business have a key part to play in the Ukraine recovery,” he said. “This is the kind of thing which cit-

izens around the world can do. Citizens must stand up to tyranny with what they have.”

With Ukraine now the most heavily mined country in the world, ahead of Afghanistan and Syria, Minderoo Foundation’s \$5m pledge will support the UN-backed de-mining program in the country.

With about one million Ukrainians working in the agricultural sectors having lost their livelihoods, Mrs Forrest said “an area 2½ times the size of Tasmania is now estimated to be contaminated with deadly landmines and unexploded ordinance – or 25 per cent of Ukraine’s landmass”.

“A large portion of these landmines are in prime agricultural land whose continued presence is a hindrance to investment, food security, and an endangerment to human life,” she said.

The de-mining program uses satellite imagery to map land before sending in teams to clear the area.

In a statement, Minderoo Foundation said the \$5m contribution would “see upwards of 4600 households directly supported and more than 11,520 people reached with explosive ordinance risk training”.

“Prior to today’s announcement, Minderoo Foundation had committed just under \$14m in critical aid to the people of Ukraine, including projects to enhance food and energy security as well as the protection and development of the children of Ukraine,” the statement said.

WORLD P
8



MARTIN OLLMAN / NCA NEWSWIRE, OFFICE OF THE PRESIDENT OF UKRAINE

Ukrainian ambassador Vasyl Myroshnychenko with Andrew Forrest at the National Press Club on Monday; below, Mr Forrest with Volodymyr Zelensky

