

Ukraine envoys step up push for support



By [BEN PACKHAM](#), FOREIGN AFFAIRS AND DEFENCE CORRESPONDENT, The Australian, APRIL 13, 2023

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky has ordered the nation's diplomats to work "24-7" to secure more support for the country ahead of its coming counteroffensive against Russian forces, but the country remains in the dark on further Australian assistance.

Ukraine's Ambassador to Australia Vasyl Myroshnychenko, who attended a phone hook-up with the President early on Thursday morning, said he was yet to get a clear commitment from the Albanese government on a new assistance package, but he remained hopeful Australia would provide additional support.

"I saw the chief-of-staff of the (Australian) Minister for Defence two weeks ago and she confirmed the department has been instructed to work on a plan for Ukraine this year," Mr Myroshnychenko told The Australian. "But I haven't heard back what that would be and what could be supplied."

The call comes as Anthony Albanese's office refuses to confirm the Prime Minister's attendance at the upcoming NATO summit in Lithuania, which will be heavily focused on the war in Ukraine and China's challenge to the rules-based order.

Mr Myroshnychenko said he hoped Mr Albanese would attend the July 11-12 summit in Vilnius with his Japanese, South Korean and New Zealand counterparts. But if Mr Albanese was unable to be there, he said he would welcome Defence Minister Richard Marles attending in his place.

Australia has tumbled down the ranks of donors to Ukraine after previously being the largest non-NATO supporter of Kyiv's war effort.

Mr Myroshnychenko said Ukraine was seeking military vehicles, arms and ammunition, as well as non-military support such as fuel, medical supplies and firefighting equipment.

He said President Zelensky had called on the country's diplomats to work around the clock with their host governments to ensure pledged equipment was delivered as soon as possible, and secure new commitments for assistance to help bring the war to a close.

"This is, of course, not a competition and we really appreciate Australia's contributions," Mr Myroshnychenko said.

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky urges support for rebuilding in Ukraine, "by rebuilding what has been...

"But at the same time, I talk to a lot of Australians and they have told me they believe that Australia can and should do more."

A visiting Ukrainian Defence Ministry delegation last month urged the Albanese government to donate US-made Abrams tanks and new Hawkei protected vehicles to help the country push back Russian forces.

"We invite Australia to join the international tanks coalition," Ukrainian Defence Ministry adviser Yuriy Sak said.

"Every tank will bring us closer to victory. But it's also a symbolic gesture to other countries to join the tank coalition ... everybody understands that this is a war that we have to win."

Peter Dutton said it was important for Mr Albanese to attend the NATO summit "to represent our interests".

"NATO, you know, doesn't take an active interest in our part of the world without good reason and they are concerned about what they're seeing at the moment (in the Indo-Pacific)," the Opposition Leader said while in Alice Springs on Thursday.