

PM announces new air defence for Ukraine on first visit to Kyiv

Prime Minister Rishi Sunak has said it is “deeply humbling” to be in Kyiv and pledged that the UK will continue to stand by Ukrainians in their fight, on his first visit to the country today [Saturday 19th November].

Meeting President Zelenskyy, he confirmed that the UK will provide a major new package of air defence to help protect Ukrainian civilians and critical national infrastructure from an intense barrage of Russian strikes.

The £50 million package of defence aid comprises 125 anti-aircraft guns and technology to counter deadly Iranian-supplied drones, including dozens of radars and anti-drone electronic warfare capability. It follows more than 1,000 new anti-air missiles announced by the Defence Secretary earlier this month.

In the last week, Ukrainian forces say Russia has rained down more than 148 missile strikes on critical infrastructure, leaving approximately 10 million people without power. The UK is also bolstering our training offer to Ukrainian’s armed forces, sending expert army medics and engineers to the region to offer specialised support.

In Kyiv, the Prime Minister laid flowers at a memorial for the war dead and lit a candle at a memorial for victims of the Holodomor famine, before meeting first responders at a fire station. The team of emergency responders described their harrowing work rescuing survivors from the rubble and fighting fires in the aftermath of Russian airstrikes and mortar attacks. He also saw captured Iranian-made drones which have been used to target and bomb civilians in recent months.

Prime Minister Rishi Sunak said:

I am proud of how the UK stood with Ukraine from the very beginning. And I am here today to say the UK and our allies will continue to stand with Ukraine, as it fights to end this barbarous war and deliver a just peace.

While Ukraine’s armed forces succeed in pushing back Russian forces on the ground, civilians are being brutally bombarded from the air. We are today providing new air defence, including anti-aircraft guns, radar and anti-drone equipment, and stepping up humanitarian support for the cold, hard winter ahead.

It is deeply humbling to be in Kyiv today and to have the opportunity to meet those who are doing so much, and paying so high a price, to defend the principles of sovereignty and democracy.

Recognising that Ukrainians face a very difficult winter, with widespread blackouts of destruction of homes, schools and hospitals, the Prime Minister has also confirmed £12 million for the World Food Programme's response, as well as £4 million for the International Organisation for Migration. The funding will help provide generators, shelter, water repairs and mobile health clinics. The UK is also sending tens of thousands of extreme cold winter kits for Ukrainian troops.

Working with the Government of Ukraine, the UK has identified an initial eight construction projects to be supported by UK Export Finance, helping to repair Ukraine's critical infrastructure and lay the foundations for economic recovery. The projects include six bridges and two housing projects, including a development in Bucha for some 2,250 residents.