

# UK donating undersea minehunter drones to help Ukraine clear coastline

The UK is giving underwater drones to Ukraine and training Ukrainian personnel in Britain to use them to clear their coastline of mines.

Six autonomous minehunting vehicles will be sent to the country to help detect Russian mines in the waters off its coast. Three of these will be provided from UK stocks, with a further three to be purchased from industry.

The lightweight autonomous vehicle is designed for use in shallow coastal environments, operating effectively at depths of up to 100m to detect, locate and identify mines using an array of sensors so the Ukrainian Navy can destroy them.

Dozens of Ukrainian Navy personnel will be taught to use the drones over the coming months, with the first tranche having already begun their training.

Russia has been weaponising food by destroying Ukrainian agriculture and blockading the country's Black Sea ports to prevent exports, with devastating consequences for the world's poorest people as food prices rise.

A small number of ships carrying grain have left Ukraine since the UN brokered a deal in July to allow food exports, but efforts to get food out of the country continue to be hampered by sea mines left by Russian forces along Ukraine's coast.

## **Defence Secretary Ben Wallace said:**

Russia's cynical attempts to hold the world's food supply to ransom must not be allowed to succeed.

This vital equipment and training will help Ukraine make their waters safe, helping to smooth the flow of grain to the rest of the world and supporting the Armed Forces of Ukraine as they look to defend their coastline and ports.

The Royal Navy's Diving & Threat Exploitation Group will conduct the three-week training courses, alongside the US Navy 6th Fleet. Having considerable experience using the equipment already they will conduct training at sea to operate the vessels and interpret the data they send back to identify mock mines.

## **Admiral Sir Ben Key, First Sea Lord and Chief of the Naval Staff, said:**

Through the expert skills being taught here, our Ukrainian allies

will be able to clear their own waters of mines. These weapons target shipping indiscriminately, but particularly affect civilian traffic and trade and have had a devastating impact on freedom of navigation in the Black Sea.

This training is another powerful demonstration of the UK's ongoing commitment to Ukraine in their fight to defend their country and repel Russian aggression.

**Captain Ben Vickery Royal Navy, Captain of Royal Navy Diving and Mine Warfare said:**

The Ukrainian personnel have been fantastic, and it is a pleasure to be working with them and helping them in their struggle to defend their homeland against the aggression they are currently suffering.

These incredible, motivated and very professional sailors have thrown themselves into the task and have made incredible progress gaining an excellent level of proficiency.

I am hugely proud of them, and the Royal Navy Clearance Divers and Mine Warfare specialists delivering the training, standing shoulder to shoulder – stronger together to achieve this vital training mission driven by our shared values and a common bond.

The Royal Navy is also training Ukrainian sailors to operate Sandown Class Minehunter vessels.

Armed Forces Minister James Heappey and his Ukrainian counterpart Volodymyr Havrylov [visited Scotland in July](#) to watch trainees practicing key skills at sea, such as weapon drills and damage control, whilst learning to operate the machinery on the vessels.

The UK is also leading a major international programme to train up to 10,000 Ukrainian volunteer recruits in basic military skills, which Canada, Denmark, Finland, Sweden, Norway, Germany, Latvia and the Netherlands have all announced they will support.