

Ukraine's soldiers plead for Anthony Albanese to give them Hawkei vehicles despite faults



[Ukrainian soldiers demonstrate an Australian Bushmaster at a secret training base in the Donetsk region in Ukraine's east. Picture: Liam Mendes](#)

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[Ukrainian soldiers](#) fighting on the frontline have pleaded for Australia to supply them with faulty Hawkei light armoured patrol vehicles after repeated requests have been stonewalled by the - Albanese government.

At a secret training base in the Donetsk Oblast region in Ukraine's east, near the site of some of the fiercest fighting of the war, The Weekend Australian shared the back of an Australian-made Bushmaster with soldiers keen to see more help in the "fight for democracy".

While the Bushmasters have been warmly welcomed, [Anthony Albanese](#) has rejected desperate calls from Kyiv to supply Ukraine with Australian-built Hawkei vehicles, citing "a range of reasons".

In April, [The Australian revealed faults with the anti-lock braking system](#) were behind a reluctance to supply Ukraine with the four-wheel drives. They can travel much faster and are far more mobile than the Bushmasters, of which Australia has already donated 120.

From near the frontline against Russia's invasion, Ukrainian soldiers said they would gladly take the vehicles to protect them, despite the braking issues.

"I think it's not really a problem at all ... some problems, troubles with ABS system, is not a problem because you still have brakes," said Matviy of the 80th Air Assault Brigade.

"Sometimes on the frontline, you don't have even the ability to brake, so it's not the big problem."

Australian has sent 120 armoured vehicles to aid Ukraine in the war against Russia - but soldiers on the frontline...

He said the Ukrainian army would be able to work with the vehicles if provided with them, citing other Western equipment such as tanks and aircraft they had been able to operate.

Anti-lock braking systems help prevent skidding and loss of steering on slippery surfaces, but are typically turned off on loose or uneven terrain.

“The main question is in the desire and enthusiasm,” Matviy said. “If you want, you can fly in space, so if you want, you can adapt.”

He said the Ukrainian priority was the protection of soldiers.



[A Ukrainian soldier atop an Australian Bushmaster in Ukraine's east. Picture: Liam Mendes](#)

At a secret training base in the Donetsk Oblast region, military units train in between combat missions to try to liberate nearby towns, including Bakhmut, which Russia has held since May.

Having returned that morning from a 24-hour-long mission, the soldiers demonstrated how they would storm enemy positions – just as they'd done in the hours prior.

With the sound of artillery in the background – some training, some from the frontline – the Bushmaster carrying the soldiers charged down the mountainous terrain, and began firing the 50 calibre machine gun attached to the turret. After it came to a halt, out came the soldiers, taking positions and firing towards the (makeshift) enemy.



[Ukrainian soldiers demonstrate an Australian Bushmaster in Ukraine's east. Pictured are Captain Matviy, Murava \(pseudonym\) and Tur \(pseudonym\). Picture: Liam Mendes](#)

An Australian-supplied Bushmaster assigned to a different unit was destroyed last week by artillery in Bakhmut, but it saved the eight Ukrainian soldiers on-board. Had they been in a different vehicle, there's a good chance they might not be alive.

"We had the situation when we were in Bakhmut, and we was shelled under artillery fire and the shell come close to us and the Bushmaster was turned upside down, and everyone was alive and unharmed," Matviy said.

Another Bushmaster was hit by an anti-tank rocket system.

"The rocket hit directly the Bushmaster, and (if) you were in another armoured vehicle, the chance of survival is very low ... they have some injuries, but they were alive and the level of injuries was not so severe," he said.



[An Australian Bushmaster damaged by an anti-tank mine.](#)

Some Bushmasters have been left inoperable because of a shortage of spare parts – especially tyres, which are “constantly being damaged” by shrapnel. “If an artillery shell or mine has dropped nearby, after the explosion, the wheels are sometimes damaged and we cannot use it so wheels are a big problem,” Matviy said.

His message to the Prime Minister? “Fight for democracy,” he said. “I ask you to continue to support us comprehensively, until the complete victory against the Russian expansion.”

Additional reporting: Illia Oliinyk