

Labor formally rejects Ukrainian plea for helicopters

[JOE KELLY](#), The Australian, 18 Jan 2024



Acting Defence Minister Pat Conroy has formally responded to Ukraine, declining the request for Australia to donate its retired fleet of MRH-90 helicopters because it was no longer feasible to return the aircraft to an operational state.

Mr Conroy on Thursday wrote to Lieutenant General Kyrilo Budanov – chief of the Defence Intelligence of Ukraine who initially made the request to acquire the helicopters on December 17 – to explain the decision of the Australian government.

Defence has begun working with Airbus Australia Pacific and NH Industries to harvest key spares from the Taipan fleet for the use of other MRH-90 operators and the government has offered a briefing to Ukrainian Ambassador Vasyl Myroshnychenko on its decision.

A spokesman for Mr Conroy told The Australian that "none of the aircraft are currently in flying condition and it is not feasible to return the aircraft to an operational state."

"The Australian government continues to work closely with Ukraine to consider further options to provide timely, meaningful and sustainable assistance."

Director of Strategic Analysis Australia, Peter Jennings, questioned how the government could have moved so quickly to dismantle the fleet of 45 MRH-90 helicopters.

"How we have gotten to this position is simply bizarre, even accepting the Army view that they didn't like it (the Taipan)," Mr Jennings said. "How it is that literally in the space of about 2.5 months we have destroyed \$1bn worth of technology leaves me speechless."