

Exclusive Politics Federal [Russia-Ukraine war](#)

## Ukraine diaspora chief to Australia: Prepare to break with Trump on war



**Matthew Knott**

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The global head of the Ukrainian diaspora has urged Peter Dutton to reverse his “short-sighted” opposition to sending Australian peacekeepers to Ukraine, arguing Australia must be prepared to break with the United States if Donald Trump definitively abandons the war-ravaged nation.

Paul Grod, the elected president of the Ukrainian World Congress, also called for Australia to stare down dire warnings [from the Putin regime of “grave consequences”](#) about sending troops to Ukraine, saying such rhetoric was predictable Kremlin propaganda.



Paul Grod, President Ukrainian World Congress, said it was in Australia's interests to join a "coalition of the willing" in Ukraine. DOMINIC LORRIMER

British Prime Minister [Keir Starmer has applauded Prime Minister Anthony Albanese](#) for being willing to contribute to a "coalition of the willing" in Ukraine, while Dutton has argued it would be against the national interest to send Australian troops to eastern Europe.

Grod, who is visiting Australia to meet with government officials and leaders of the Ukrainian-Australian community, said: "The reality is that you need to be part of this coalition of the willing because that coalition will be willing to help you.

"As you have difficult securities challenges in the region, you want Europe to be able to step up and say 'we're prepared to help Australia', even if the United States is not prepared to help Australia.

"That's what needs to be impressed upon the opposition: that it is in Australia's best interest to be part of this coalition because a friend in need is a friend indeed."

Grod urged Australia to help Ukraine by providing more military equipment, funding the nation's sovereign defence industry and agreeing to send "boots on the ground" as part of a European-led coalition.

"Whether Australia sends 100, 1000 or 10,000 people, it's symbolic that it is there as part of the coalition of the willing," said Grod, a Ukrainian-Canadian businessman who has visited Ukraine nine times since Russia's invasion in 2022.

"We're seeing that we have a disruptive US policy right now, and that's why the rest of the world needs to be more aligned and unified than ever before."

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He added: “It’s also a great opportunity for Australia to get direct combat level experience. You have a very difficult situation in your region as well, and you certainly want your troops to be battle-trained.”

Arguing that Trump has little interest in the security of allies such as Australia, Grod said: “If China is emboldened then how far are they going to go? And is Trump going to stand up for Australia? I don’t think so.”

Dutton has said that “to base troops in Europe at the moment is the wrong decision for our country” because Australia “should be doing everything we can to bolster our security and our defences”.

The Russian embassy in Canberra warned, in a statement to this masthead on Monday, that Australia joining a peacekeeping coalition “would entail grave consequences” and that “Western boots on the ground are unacceptable for Russia”.

Grod said such warnings should be ignored as they were intended to help establish eastern Europe as Russia’s uncontested sphere of influence.

“The response has to be that Russia can’t dictate terms for other countries and it is up to the sovereign government of Ukraine if it wants troops stationed there,” he said.

A spokesperson for Foreign Minister Penny Wong said: “Our message to Russia is: end your illegal invasion of Ukraine. We won’t be intimidated from working towards a just peace for the people of Ukraine.”

Grod said there were alarming signs that the Trump administration was trying to force Ukraine into a “full-on capitulation” by halting military aid and intelligence sharing.

Rather than pressuring Ukraine into agreeing to a truce on Russia’s terms, he said the more likely outcome is that Ukraine continues to defend itself with the help friendly nations.

“The Ukrainians will not surrender, they will not capitulate, they will continue to fight,” he said. “The question is: are we going to give them the means to do so? I think that Europe is certainly of the opinion that we have to be ready to go this alone.”

Grod has led the Ukrainian World Congress, which represents 25 million Ukrainian expatriates, since 2018 and is banned from entering Russia because of his opposition to the Putin regime.

He said that while Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky “let his emotions get the better of him” in his combative Oval Office meeting with Trump last month, he believed there was little he could have done to win the US president over.

Grod said he believed Trump was prepared to sacrifice Ukraine in a quixotic bid to establish a US-Russia alliance to compete against China.

“I think he has no interest in Ukraine’s security and future,” he said. “I think he will go down as the Neville Chamberlain of this century and history will not treat him kindly.”

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