

OPINION

Please don't forget about Ukraine. This war is about Australia too



[Vasyl Myroshnychenko](#), Ukrainian Ambassador, December 26, 2023

A current public service announcement on Australian television starkly warns of the deadly consequences of driver fatigue. It specifically mentions that most fatigue-related casualties are close to the driver's home.

The ad makes me think of Ukraine's situation in relation to the world, including its allies. As Russia's unprovoked, full-scale invasion approaches its third year, some seem to have become fatigued by the war. Or, the war has been "overtaken" in the media cycle by other world events, such as the images from the Middle East that fill our feeds. Worse still, polarised American politics now threatens Ukraine aid.

Fatigue (or forgetting, ignoring or even neglecting Ukraine for domestic political gain) is truly dangerous, not only for Ukrainians but also their allies such as Australians. It is especially dangerous at this point when the war hangs in a balance.

Russian President Vladimir Putin has admitted that the war on Ukraine is really Russia's war on the West and the values that it stands for. If the West gives up on Ukraine, it gives up on its own democracies in favour of aggression and autocracy.

Now is especially not the time to allow that. The situation on the ground is that, following Russia's occupation of more Ukrainian territory in February 2021, Ukrainian forces have steadily been liberating their homeland. Russian forces have not had a single substantial victory or gain in the past two years anywhere across a front of some 1300 kilometres – the distance from Sydney to Adelaide – and that shows the potential, with Western support, to defeat them in the coming period.

Ukraine's grinding but gradual advance – criticised by Russian strategic propaganda – has been unprecedented. It involves infantry forces, like those trained by Australian Army personnel, moving forward through a maze of minefields, trench systems and fortifications without the benefit of air power – a feat never attempted in modern warfare. While Ukraine awaits promised fighter jets, it is now experiencing a shortage in the basic artillery shells that have enabled its soldiers to press ahead.

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[New documentary reveals Australia's true connection with Ukraine](#) Chris Uhlmann's special report on the Ukraine war

In response to its battlefield defeats, including massive casualties of its conscripts, Russia's strategy is to unleash terror from the sky on Ukraine's cities. That includes an attack last week on Kyiv with more than 10 ballistic missiles; that single attack cost the Russians more than \$90 million – money that should be spent on their kids' schools — to injure 53 local people.

Thankfully, we are not alone. Australia has been an absolutely loyal and active friend of Ukraine during its existential fight, which continues every day on battlefields if not in your headlines. We especially thank the government for most recently extending the training it is providing in the UK to Ukrainian troops.

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A recent Channel Nine documentary by journalist Chris Uhlmann – [*Forged in Fire*](#) – highlighted how Australian technology including Bushmasters, cardboard drones and life-saving medical devices, as well as individual Australians in Ukraine such as humanitarian workers, chaplains and rugby league champions, are helping us. There is now a moral bridge over the great distance between our like-minded countries.

I have written to the Australian government to warn that Russia intends to make this a brutal northern winter for Ukrainians by again targeting their energy infrastructure. Ukraine has had to ask for Australia's further support regarding energy supply and energy equipment to keep the lights and the heat on.

We need Australian coal for the winter.

In these representations, my government is very grateful for the support of peak business and mining groups and the union movement, including the Australian Workers Union, the Mining and Energy Union, and the Shop, Distributive and Allied Employees Association.

Everywhere I go in your beautiful country, I have regular Australians kindly ask me: "What's going on over there?" It tells me that, while Ukraine's defence of democracy is not on the front page and is subject to fatigue, it is still in Australians' hearts and thoughts. That is to the benefit of Ukraine but, I suggest, also to Australia.

Vasyl Myroshnychenko is Ukraine's ambassador to Australia.