

DEFENCE

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Ukrainian ambassador wants Australian technology tested on front lines

By Sam Jones



Ukrainian ambassador Vasyl Myroshnychenko. Photo: Sam Jones.

Ukrainian ambassador to Australia, Vasyl Myroshnychenko, has advocated for wider collaboration on defence technology and critical minerals with Australia, even floating an idea for Ukrainian technology to be manufactured in Australia.

Speaking at the Indo-Pacific Robotics, Autonomy, AI and Cyber conference at the Pan Pacific Hotel in Perth on Tuesday, Mr Myroshnychenko said Australia and Ukraine had an opportunity to form a mutually beneficial relationship in both sectors.

He said the Russian invasion had created a 'battlefield lab' for new defence technologies, one he would like to see Australian defence companies use.

"Ukraine is a battlefield lab ... where you can deploy new technology, get immediate feedback and you can improve your technology," he said.

"Military technology is moving so fast that by the time you can test in Australia - where sometimes you need to book a firing range twelve months in advance - the technology is already old."

Ambassador Myroshnychenko was questioned on whether he thought that testing should be of both offensive and defensive Australian technology.

"Ukraine is far ahead of other western nations with new defence technology; but we only have capacity to build around 40 per cent of what the war demands," he said.

"We own IP, and we are manufacturing ourselves, but we are interested in setting up production in Australia so that you can get a hold of that new technology by investing, together with us in production here to cater to your needs, to cater to the needs of New Zealand, of any other like minded country in the region."

Mr Myroshnychenko was also keen to see Australia work with Ukraine on critical minerals.

"When I speak about defence industry, what is important every single round of ammunition requires lots of rare earth minerals, antimony, for instance," he said.

"Currently monopoly (of antimony processing) is within China. You mine it here, you mine it in other places. But processing of antimony is done in one country, and it's not sustainable, and we need to actually work together on diversifying the global supply chains of rare earth metals."

"I believe there is an opportunity for Australian companies in this minerals deal to help us with mapping of those resources, to help us with building infrastructure for upstream extraction of lots of critical minerals. This is where WA has a huge role to play."

Asked whether the use of Australian technology, whether defensive or offensive, would draw Australia into a wider conflict, Mr Myroshnychenko issued a stark warning.

"The global defence industry is not equipped for the modern day challenges, and to deter a bigger war in the Indo-Pacific, we need to make sure that Russia fails in Ukraine," he said.

"Australia has a vested interest in making sure that that Russia fails. Because if Russia does not fail, it will open up a door for other authoritarian leaders in the region to use it and as an example, as a precedent to change borders by force."

Mr Myroshnychenko was one of over 40 high-profile speakers at the Indo-Pacific Robotics, Autonomy, AI and Cyber conference, running at the Pan Pacific Perth from October 10 to October 12.