



Written by [Angeline Tan](#) on January 17, 2023

Taiwan Offers to Help Ukraine With Digital Reconstruction

SINGAPORE — Taiwan is open to aiding Ukraine in overhauling its digital infrastructure in areas such as remote learning as part of reconstruction efforts after the war, the island's Digital Minister Audrey Tang told *Reuters*.

Tang made her comments in Vilnius, Lithuania, in her first foreign visit since her appointment as digital minister in August 2022. She singled out the digitalization of Taiwan's education system as an example of how the island nation could help Ukraine.

"Taiwan has already provided humanitarian aid [to Ukraine] in terms of generators, equipment and so on, but we are also thinking about the digital layer," Tang said.

"We want to provide what has enabled the various people in Taiwan to be a transcultural learning community, despite very different backgrounds."

Although Tang said there have been no official talks with Ukraine's government on digital cooperation, she has been liaising with personal contacts.

In Vilnius, Tang laid a wreath on graves of civilians killed in January 1991 by the Soviet army, after a botched attempt to overthrow the pro-independence government.

Moreover, Taiwan set up a representative office in Vilnius in November 2021, rattling China, which views the island as a renegade province to be reunited with the mainland, by force if necessary, and thus should not be forming its own official relations with other countries. Taiwan's government strongly dismisses China's sovereignty claims.

In response, China reduced diplomatic ties with Vilnius, causing the Lithuanian government to withdraw its diplomats from Beijing.

Reuters reports also indicated that China was pushing German companies to avoid using components made in Lithuania.

Lithuania is a member of both the European Union and NATO.

In September last year, Tang also said that Taiwan was exploring Ukraine's ways of communicating with the outside world during conflicts, by capitalizing on tools such as satellites and using humor.

Tang's remarks were made amid China's heightened pugilism following the then-U.S. House Speaker Nancy Pelosi's high-profile visit to Taiwan in August last year. China's military activities have raised worries on the island about the prospect of a Chinese invasion.

"We look at the experience of Russia's invasion of Ukraine in February. We found that the whole world



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can know what is happening there in real time,” Tang opined.

Ukraine had successfully communicated its message to the world, said Tang, elaborating that maintaining high-quality communication in real time was vital to its effort.

“It’s not only for our own people, but also for the people who care about us all over the world, so that we can enlist the assistance of international friends.”

One of Tang’s plans to sustain communications should China invade is a satellite trial program amounting to 550 million Taiwan dollars over the next two years to maintain internet services across Taiwan.

The aim, Tang stated, was to ensure social stability and keep Taiwan’s command systems operating by “instantly” resorting to other forms of communication, such as satellites in Medium and Low Earth Orbit.

Various Taiwanese firms are in discussions with global satellite service providers, seeking collaborations after such services are legalized in Taiwan, she added, but did not elaborate further.

Ukraine was relying on billionaire Elon Musk’s Starlink satellite broadband service, for instance.

Tang was responsible for shaping Taiwan’s public messaging during the Covid-19 outbreak, depending on memes and humor to counter what was deemed disinformation, much of which the government blamed China for spreading, although Beijing rejected such claims.

“We say very publicly that our playbook is ‘humor over rumor,’” Tang said.

“As we have seen with the Ukrainian example, there are also people who use ideas of even comedy, but certainly Internet memes, to spread a message that rallies the people.”

A vibrant Twitter user with over 250,000 followers, Tang said she was unfazed by online attacks, which could entail claims that she is a separatist.

Chinese state media rely heavily on Twitter and other Western social-media platforms, even though they are forbidden in China.

When questioned about China using social media in its messaging campaign against Taiwan in case of a war, Tang said that was already happening.

“From my point of view, it’s my daily life. Already, the kind of propaganda as you call it, the kind of narratives going on on Twitter, that’s already what we face daily.”

Meanwhile, Ukraine also has been digitizing its state institutions, following the conflict that broke out with Russia in February 2022. Digital Minister Mykhailo Fedorov at the Ukraine Recovery Conference in Lugano, Switzerland, said that Ukraine’s reconstruction must also involve digitalizing state institutions.

In Lugano, Fedorov unveiled the Digital4Freedom initiative, which aims to transform Ukraine into the “most digital state” within three years. The minister broached the notion of a digital Marshall Plan to reboot the bombed-out infrastructure in his country and propel it to the next level technologically.

“And we are continuing to digitize our administration despite the fighting,” said Fedorov.

The 31-year-old minister and former IT entrepreneur who was part of Ukraine’s delegation in Lugano has been a friend of Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky for many years, fueling the growth of the tech industry in Ukraine.



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Fedorov's ministry has helped the country raise funds for the war against Russia. For example, the ministry used the [United24 platform](#) to collect funds to obtain military and medical supplies. Civilians presently can use a chatbot to upload clips of Russian troop activities, which is supposedly an excellent source of information for the Ukrainian military. Fedorov boasted of an "IT army" composed of volunteers who parried Russian cyberattacks and hacked websites of Russian authorities. Besides, Fedorov has relied on social media to lobby Western tech companies to withdraw from Russia — with some success. Apple, Google, and Meta have since departed from Russia. It was Fedorov who asked Elon Musk via Twitter to secure Ukraine's internet connection via his Starlink satellite network. Musk responded in the affirmative and internet connections in some areas in Ukraine are now faster than prior to the outbreak of the conflict.



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