



Written by [Angeline Tan](#) on January 16, 2024

Ukraine Urges Citizens to Build Drones at Home, Commander Says Army Is “Mostly Old Men”

In a Facebook post on January 13, Ukraine’s Deputy PM and Digital Transformation Minister Mykhailo Fedorov suggested that Ukrainian citizens should finish online courses and start assembling drones to fulfill the needs of the Ukrainian military amid military tensions with Russia.

The aim of manufacturing one million UAVs (Unmanned Aerial Vehicles) in 2024, recently declared by Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky, is “realistic” if the public aids the government, Fedorov maintained. Small, first-person-view (FPV) drones have become “a game-changer” in the conflict, he argued.



AP Images
Mykhailo Fedorov

Since the Russia-Ukraine conflict intensified in February 2022, the Kyiv regime has removed many legal hurdles limiting drone production. Also, Ukrainian firms are presently increasing output, the minister elaborated.

However, anyone can bolster Ukraine’s UAV arsenal by completing “an engineering course that teaches you how to assemble a seven-inch FPV drone at home,” Fedorov claimed.

Moreover, the minister asserted that this online program provides lectures, Zoom conferences with experts, a list of components and must-have tools and materials required to make a UAV, as well as access to an engineering community for advice and questions. A new course starts every two weeks and is absolutely free, he posited.

Fedorov praised the fact that program participants have allegedly already assembled around a hundred drones, 80 percent of which were in working order.

The head of Electronic and Cyber Warfare at Ukraine’s General Staff, Colonel Ivan Pavlenko, admitted to the Financial Times (FT) last week that “the Russians have been producing so many [drones] lately that it’s becoming a huge threat” for Kiev’s forces.

In the same article, the FT reported that Moscow also “maintains the upper hand” when it comes to electronic-warfare technology meant to stall and divert enemy UAVs, while Kyiv is merely “trying to catch up.”

Former Ukrainian MP Igor Lutsenko, who now serves in the military, told Ukrainian outlet Telegraf last week that Russia is launching around a hundred drones per day on the front line. Nonetheless, with production in Russia increasing, Lutsenko said he anticipates the daily launches to rise to 200 or 300 soon.

As for Ukraine, the aim of making one million UAVs this year is “achievable” but would be insufficient, he warned, as the country actually requires two or three times that.



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Speaking to *Espresso TV* on Sunday, January 14, Aleksey Tarasenko, commander of Kyiv's 5th Assault Brigade, contended that the average age of soldiers in the Ukrainian army is over 40 years old, adding that the military is in huge need of younger recruits.

Tarasenko said it is "outlandish and perplexing" to hear that some people question the need for another mobilization. "The military is eagerly awaiting fresh reinforcements because the situation in many units is critical in terms of personnel," he stated. "Even those who do come often leave much to be desired. Mostly, these are men of a much older age with a multitude of problems that typically arise."

The military desperately needs "young men" because those who joined the army at the very beginning of the conflict are mostly "gone," he said.

Tarasenko's comments came after the Ukrainian parliament asked the government for more revisions of a much-debated bill that would lower the maximum draft age from 27 to 25, restrict deferrals, and raise penalties for draft dodgers. Opponents say the bill contains provisions that breach the constitution and give rise to corruption.

Last month, Zelensky revealed that the army had requested the deployment of between 450,000 and 500,000 people. Valeriy Zaluzhny, Ukraine's top general, dismissed claims that Ukraine's military asked for a specific number of new fighters.

Current circumstances in Ukraine led authorities to contemplate options for replenishing battlefield losses, including introducing electronic call-up papers exploring the conscription of women.

The governor of Ukraine's Nikolaev Region, Valery Kim, cautioned earlier that conscripting half a million people "is not enough," and Ukraine needs to enlist at least two million.

According to Russia's estimates, nearly 500,000 Ukrainian troops have been killed or injured during the Russo-Ukrainian conflict, including 125,000 over the course of Kyiv's botched counteroffensive between early June and late November. Unlike Russia, Ukraine does not disclose casualty numbers.

In an ABC News interview posted on January 15, Ukrainian Foreign Minister Dmitry Kuleba warned that "time is running out" for U.S. lawmakers to authorize additional military aid to Kyiv, alleging that costs for Western nations will be far higher if Russian forces defeat Ukraine.

Offering more money and weapons to Ukraine will help the United States and its NATO allies prevent a direct confrontation with Russia, Kuleba said.

"Whatever the price of supporting Ukraine is now, the price of fixing the mess in the world if Ukraine loses will be much, much higher," he elaborated.

Washington, the largest sponsor of what some U.S. politicians have called a "proxy war" in Ukraine, has run out of money for Kyiv after utilizing \$113 billion in congressionally approved aid packages. U.S. President Joe Biden's latest funding request, which includes \$61.4 billion in additional military and financial assistance for Ukraine, has met with obstacles due to increasing resistance from Republican lawmakers.

Senator J.D. Vance (R-Ohio) and other Republican critics have contended that Biden lacks a strategy for victory in Ukraine and is merely extending the bloodshed by continuing to send aid.

Kuleba purported that a Russian victory in Ukraine would send a dangerous message to other adversaries of the United States. "If the West is not able to stop Russia in Ukraine, who else is able to stop in other parts of the world?" he questioned. The diplomat pledged that Ukrainians "will fight with



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shovels” if they run out of weapons.

ABC pointed out that Russian forces have made territorial gains in recent weeks and have assumed an advantage over Ukraine when it comes to firepower.

That being said, Kuleba retorted that Russian gains were “minimal,” disavowing claims that Russian President Vladimir Putin is currently in a stronger position. “Hitler pretended to be very strong for many years, and we all know how it ended,” he said.

When questioned about drone attacks in Moscow’s territory, the Ukrainian FM said it was crucial to show that the conflict adversely affected Russian people. “President Putin must explain to his people why all of this is happening,” he said.

Kuleba also dismissed a report last week disclosing that an internal Pentagon probe found the United States had failed to properly keep tabs on over \$1 billion worth of weaponry sent to Ukraine.

“Everything you give to us is used for the best purpose of ending this war with Ukraine’s victory as soon as possible,” he said.

The diplomat maintained that reports of U.S. weapons being trafficked from Ukraine to other parts of the world were “fake,” adding, “So don’t believe in fakes, believe in Ukraine.”



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