



British weapons could be made in Ukraine

Description

UK/UKRAINE: On Saturday night, Downing Street and the Ministry of Defence declined to comment, saying it was a matter for industry.

But Ed Arnold, a research fellow at the Royal United Services Institute think tank and a former British army Nato officer, said: “Industry cooperation drives closeness in international relations. This might be initially billed as commercial, but it will need tacit political approval at least.”

Mr Arnold added that a deal on military equipment would “point to future long term cooperation, deepening ties between Britain and Ukraine to a level they haven’t been yet”. He said a deal of this kind would bring Ukraine “closer towards Nato and European security structures”.

Ukraine has applied to join Nato, but the alliance is unlikely to accept while the country is in a state of war. As a Nato member, fellow members would be legally compelled to actively defend it against Russia, a commitment that goes well beyond the supply of weapons.

James Black, a military procurement expert at Rand Corporation, a US security think tank, said a deal seeing a Western power manufacture heavy arms in Ukraine would be a first because the country has little history of industrial co-operation.

He added: “The Ukrainian defence industry has been primarily focused on producing and maintaining Soviet-era or indigenous technologies, and since independence it has suffered from several decades from underinvestment, stalled reforms, corruption issues, and other challenges.”

Ukraine has made some Israeli and US small arms, such as rifles, under licence, and has adapted some of its tanks to incorporate Israeli electronics.

Francis Tusa, an independent defence expert, said any new factories would present themselves as key targets for Russian bombing raids, adding: “A tank factory isn’t small. And quite frankly, if I’m Putin it’ll be one of the first places I take out.”

Deals to make Western armour would be likely be seen as antagonistic by Moscow, but Nato allies are

unlikely to be intimidated by these threats in the wake of ever more complex [arms donations](#), he added.

“At this stage anything the West does, the Russians will say that’s provocation,” said Mr Tusa, adding that the West was likely to take the stance: “Well, tough.”

By Howard Mustoe and Camilla Turner

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