

UK Donating Undersea Minehunter Drones to Help Ukraine Clear Coastline



Ukrainian navy divers in the classroom learning how to use an unmanned underwater vehicle. *U.K. ROYAL NAVY*

LONDON – Dozens of Ukrainian personnel will be taught to use the autonomous mine-hunting vehicles by the U.K. Royal Navy and its U.S. partners over the coming months, the U.K. Ministry of Defence said in an Aug. 26 release.

The U.K. is giving unmanned underwater vehicles to Ukraine and training Ukrainian personnel in Britain to use them to clear their coastline of mines.

Six autonomous minehunting vehicles will be sent to the country to help detect Russian mines in the waters off its coast. Three of these will be provided from U.K. stocks, with a further three to be purchased from industry.

The lightweight autonomous vehicle is designed for use in shallow coastal environments, operating effectively at depths of up to 100 meters to detect, locate and identify mines using an array of sensors so the Ukrainian navy can destroy them.

Dozens of Ukrainian navy personnel will be taught to use the drones over the coming months, with the first tranche having already begun their training.

Russia has been weaponizing food by destroying Ukrainian agriculture and blockading the country's Black Sea ports to prevent exports, with devastating consequences for the world's poorest people as food prices rise.



A Ukrainian sailor operates a Royal Navy-provided UUV. *U.K. ROYAL NAVY*

A small number of ships carrying grain have left Ukraine since the United Nations brokered a deal in July to allow food exports, but efforts to get food out of the country continue to be hampered by sea mines left by Russian forces along Ukraine's coast.

“Russia’s cynical attempts to hold the world’s food supply to ransom must not be allowed to succeed,” said Defence Secretary Ben Wallace. “This vital equipment and training will help Ukraine make their waters safe, helping to smooth the flow of grain to the rest of the world and supporting the armed forces of Ukraine as they look to defend their coastline and ports.”

The Royal Navy’s Diving & Threat Exploitation Group will conduct the three-week training courses, alongside the U.S. Navy’s 6th Fleet. Having considerable experience using the equipment already they will conduct training at sea to operate the vessels and interpret the data they send back to identify mock mines.

“Through the expert skills being taught here, our Ukrainian allies will be able to clear their own waters of mines,” said Adm. Sir Ben Key, First Sea Lord and chief of the Naval Staff. “These weapons target shipping indiscriminately, but particularly affect civilian traffic and trade and have had a devastating impact on freedom of navigation in the Black Sea. This training is another powerful demonstration of the UK’s ongoing commitment to Ukraine in their fight to defend their country and repel Russian aggression.”