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Ukraine's 'will' an eye opener to chief of army

Lt General Simon Stuart says after helping train Ukrainian soldiers for 15 months, Australia's own defence force has learned many lessons about warfare.

By JACQUELIN MAGNAY

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Australia has been helping with the training of Ukrainian soldiers now for 15 months and the battlefield knowledge in return has been "mutually beneficial", the Australian chief of army says.

Lt General Simon Stuart has been in the United Kingdom to visit [the 90 Australian troops helping to train](#) Ukrainian commanders in warfare, a more specialised role than the original task of providing basic infantry training under Operation Kudu.

Lt Colonel Stuart told The Australian that the "very strong, very focused morale" of the Ukrainians was "quite remarkable" some [800 days into a war](#) and particularly given the cost to the Ukrainian people.

He said there were many lessons learned from Ukraine to apply to Australia's own defence force, including understanding the enduring human nature of warfare, the impact it has on people and the importance of "will".

"We need in our own training to ensure that we are building resilience to be able to face the rigours of battle and the physical, mental and spiritual impact that combat has on people," he said.

"The role that will plays to my point about the morale of the Ukrainians that I meet, and the will of the Ukrainian people on display. I think that dimension of

warfare that involves a society is really important. It doesn't get much attention or discussion, but it's equally as important as the hardware in there."

The [training of the Ukrainians](#), conducted in various camps across England, has changed over the past months to reflect battlefield conditions.

Where the Ukrainians may have learnt basic first aid such as how to tourniquet to stop bleeding because in Afghanistan help may be an hour away, other techniques are now being adopted because help in Ukraine may be more than three hours away.

Lt Colonel Stuart said new weaponry such as drones has also changed, resulting in a need for rapid adaptation.

"The tactics to detect the drones and then to defend against them mean that you need to be more dispersed," he said.

"Try and present a lesser target and then use whatever means you may have to try and destroy those drones. So that means that the tactics or techniques and the procedures at the squad and platoon and company level, need to be adjusted to ensure that people can survive. "

He gave an example of where six soldiers gathered together in proximity of a target might be attractive to the Russians to expend ammunition on. Whereas, if they're spread out, he said "that presents an altogether different challenge, and they may look for something else".

Australia's assistance to the British in providing the training has further deepened an already close military relationship between the two countries.

He said: "The enhanced level of co-operation (between Britain and Australia) is reflective of the change, the strategic circumstances and the need in an era of great power competition to work with like minded others because none of us will be successful alone.

"If you're not a great power, then you need to work with others to promote and protect your interests."

"The UK has commitments to NATO and to Europe. And, obviously, a lot of time, effort and resources into supporting the Ukrainians in the war with Russia. We are providing, along with 30 other nations some support, whether big or small.

"If you then flip that to our region in the Indo-Pacific, you know that that's our main area of commitment. But UK also contribute to some of our activities there like Talisman Sabre last year. Depending on which part of the world you live in, and what your commitments are, you will have more of a focus in one area, but it's not exclusive. I think that that mutual co-operation within the capacity or resources we

have is a good way of explaining how that co-operation is actually playing out on the ground.”

Lt Colonel Stuart will attend Anzac Day commemorations on the Western Front at Villers-Bretonneux.

“Australians come together everywhere around the world, with our soldiers who have fallen and we all say ‘lest we forget’, and I think that for Australian soldiers, we understand that to be a promise,” he said.

“It’s wonderful part of our national character that we stop and we come together and fulfil that promise every Anzac Day, so I just am very thankful for that. That means a lot to soldiers who are serving today and certainly those who did make the ultimate sacrifice and importantly, the families that survived them.”

JACQUELIN MAGNAY, EUROPE CORRESPONDENT

Jacquelin Magnay is the Europe Correspondent for The Australian, based in London and covering all manner of big stories across political, business, Royals and security issues. She is a George Munster and Walkley Aw... [Read more](#)



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