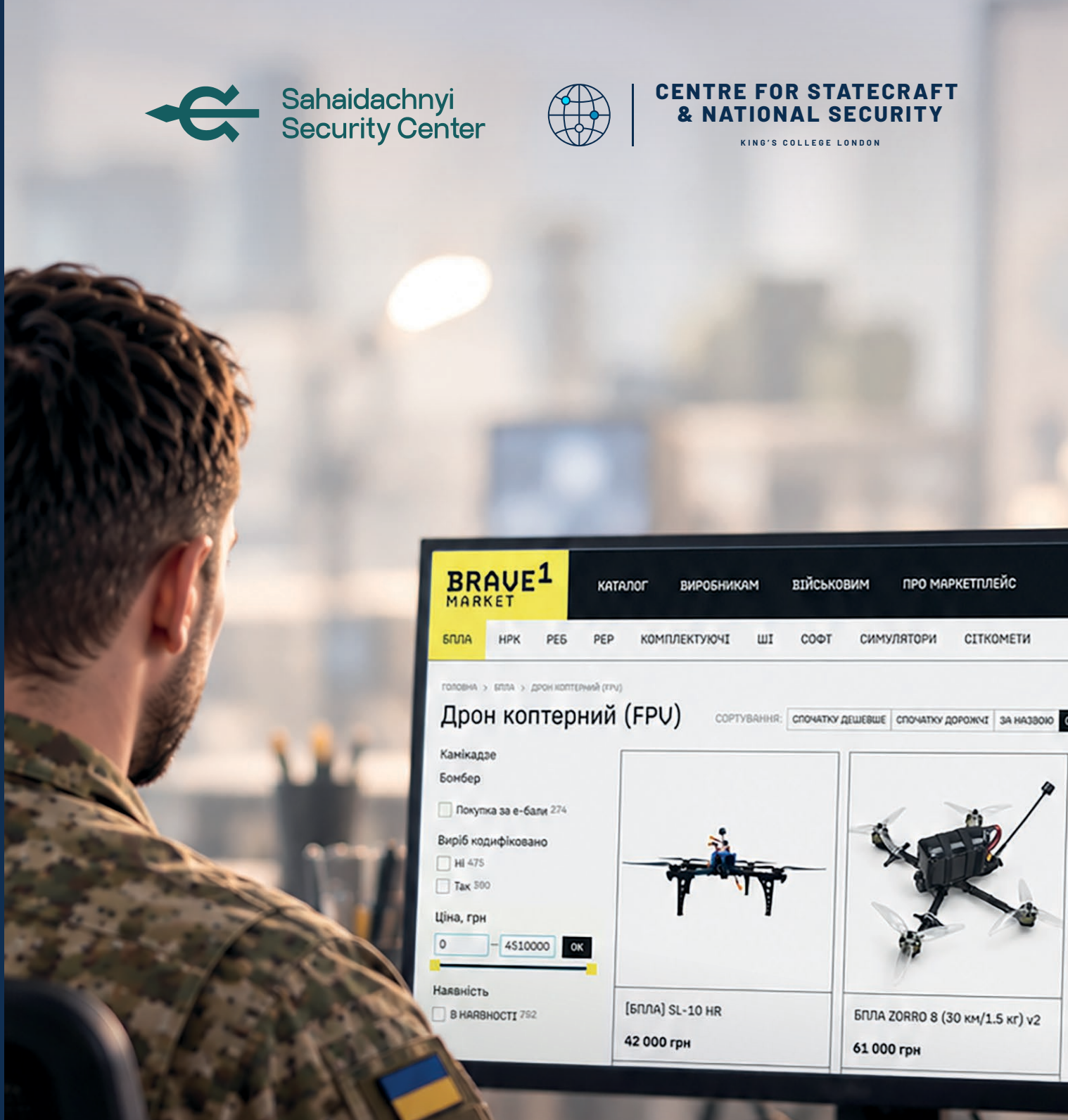
Sahaidachnyi Security Center

CENTRE FOR STATECRAFT & NATIONAL SECURITY
KING'S COLLEGE LONDON



Move Fast and Innovate: Agile Procurement in Ukrainian Defence

LESSONS FROM UKRAINE SERIES Українські уроки

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About the Project

Lessons from Ukraine is a standing publication series under the CSNS Ukraine and Russia Programme, which channels leading Ukrainian defence and security analysis directly into UK policy debate. Working with Ukrainian units and analytical centres, the series co-publishes policy-facing papers on questions of direct relevance to UK national security.

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Contents

Introduction: Procurement as an Integral Part of Combat Innovation *2*

Key Lessons from Ukraine's Wartime Procurement Reforms *3*
Recommendations for the UK *4*

1. The Development of an Agile Procurement Architecture in Ukraine *5*

2. Four Principal Centralised Procurement Mechanisms: Open Competition, Closed Competition, Direct Contracting and Digital Marketplaces *8*

3. Military Unit Impact on Procurement Through Supply-Shaping: Battlefield Testing, R&D and Production *11*

4. Procurement Officers as a New Military Function *13*

5. Adjusting Codification Procedures: Digitalisation and Accelerated Pathways *15*

6. Remaining Problems: From Procurement Speed to System Coherence *17*

7. Where the UK Stands *18*

8. Recommendations for the UK MoD *21*

Conclusion *23*

Introduction: Procurement as an Integral Part of Combat Innovation

The adaptation battle is central to understanding Russia's war on Ukraine. Novel automated and robotic platforms, and new methods of their deployment and operational use, precipitate technological, doctrinal, and tactical responses and countermeasures which themselves lead to further adaptation. A focus on technical and operational development loops presents an incomplete picture of Ukrainian innovation, however, leaving us with a weaker understanding of the structures and processes that Ukraine has developed to ensure the right equipment is produced in the required numbers, and of how lessons learned on the battlefield are translated quickly and effectively into frontline capability.

The Ukrainian experience is showing that defence procurement can no longer be understood primarily as the administrative act of purchasing equipment: it is becoming an integral part of the combat innovation system. A specification can become outdated before a tender is completed, and a successful drone can become ineffective when the enemy changes electronic warfare (EW) tactics. The agility and adaptability of a military's procurement system is therefore crucial to shortening the time between a change on the battlefield and the next production decision.

Different types of platforms, equipment and supplies require different approaches to procurement, and Ukraine has deliberately adopted a multi-layered system. High-end platforms remain long-term, state-coordinated programmes, while more decentralised approaches are taken to drones, EW, software, robotics and other rapidly evolving capabilities that require shorter procurement timescales. Central procurement provides scale and strategic coherence; decentralised mechanisms allow for rapid innovation. Both rely on digital systems that collect battlefield data and facilitate feedback.

This paper explores the evolution of the Ukrainian procurement system since Russia's full-scale invasion, how the system operates in practice and what challenges Ukraine still faces. At the end of each section, we evaluate the relevance to the UK, and conclude with overall recommendations for the UK procurement system based on wartime Ukrainian experience.

Key Lessons from Ukraine's Wartime Procurement Reforms

A. **Operational data as the centre of technology procurement.** The Ukrainian procurement system has adapted to connect battlefield requirements, orders, delivery, system performance and loss rates, so that purchasing decisions reflect operational evidence rather than static planning assumptions. For rapidly changing technologies, buyers define the necessary mission effect, operating environment and interoperability requirements, while allowing suppliers to change components and technical solutions as technology evolves.

B. **Structured access to operational feedback made available to suppliers.** Defence companies receive anonymised and security-screened data on system performance in order to base product enhancements on the most up-to-date battlefield data.

C. **Delegated procurement authority for rapidly changing capabilities.** Selected purchasing powers have been moved to brigade and, where appropriate, lower operational levels. NATO already recognises contracting as an operational logistics function, but Ukraine demonstrates the value of embedding professional procurement competence directly within combat formations. Officers responsible for decentralised purchasing require dedicated training, not only in market analysis, contracting, technical requirements, supplier assessment and procurement law, but also in digital systems containing the data on which procurement decisions are based.

D. **Combining delegated procurement with common technical architecture.** The Ukrainian Ministry of Defence (MoD) has established interoperability requirements, interfaces, cybersecurity rules and essential technical standards, while preserving competition between different designs and manufacturers.

E. **Digital marketplaces for tactical technologies.** Pre-qualified catalogues allow Ukrainian units to select systems according to mission requirements, while preserving central controls over eligibility, pricing, compliance and expenditure.

F. **Procurement ecosystems opened to smaller technology companies.** High-end platforms remain the domain of large, state-coordinated programmes, while rapidly evolving, lower-cost and precision technologies require procurement channels that allow smaller firms to enter, design and scale quickly.

Recommendations for the UK

1. Build the informed buyer. At brigade level, train and assign dedicated procurement officers and a technical trade that each sit with the units flying the systems, with the authority and the parts to rebuild, reconfigure and modify.
2. Build the competitive supply side. Qualify suppliers once for each category into an open pool, where they can compete for each order. Direct 70% of funding to solutions already proven in combat and reserve 30% for systems under operational testing.
3. Open a centrally contracted, unit-chosen marketplace for consumable technologies, giving brigades and uncrewed system formations a visible, ringfenced allocation to spend on defined consumable categories – small unmanned aircraft systems (UAS), counter-UAS, tactical EW, ground robotics and payloads.
4. Set a 30-day decision clock below ministerial level, with any delay recorded against the office responsible.
5. Specify the conditions a system (not the product) must survive, and buy support as part of the capability.
6. Learn from the front, not the capital. Place technical and procurement personnel with Ukrainian units, corps technology centres and repair labs, and share data through CORPUS.

Recommendations are set out in full in section 8.

1. The Development of an Agile Procurement Architecture in Ukraine

Although Ukraine had been at war since 2014, as of 2022 its procurement architecture remained substantially based on the Soviet-derived State Defence Acquisition system. It was centred on a state-owned conglomerate (*Ukroboronprom*) of more than 100 enterprises, running long cycles and so opaque that roughly 90% of defence purchases were classified. On 24 February 2022, this procurement system was poorly suited to a war in which demand spiked sharply, requirements could change within weeks in response to battlefield developments, commercial technologies could become weapons, and new producers could enter the market within months.

The initial response came partly from outside the formal defence procurement system. Citizens, businesses, volunteer organisations, local authorities and military units created parallel channels for buying drones, thermal imagers, communications equipment, vehicles, electronics and other equipment for frontline formations. Civil society did not merely mobilise additional money, it created an alternative procurement network capable of rapid reaction to changing needs, sourcing suppliers and delivering equipment considerably faster than the state system.[1] International partners simultaneously became part of the procurement system. In 2025, foreign funding for Ukraine's defence industry reached $6.1 billion through multiple channels, including through the Prioritised Ukraine Requirements List (PURL), the Danish model (allied states funding purchases from Ukrainian defence manufacturers) and direct procurement by partner states.[2]

Major changes were implemented within the state system, which has become far more flexible, creative and highly digitalised. It is simultaneously centralised and decentralised, through the use of multiple procurement channels with differing speeds and processes, and integrates both domestic and foreign actors. Large-volume procurement, ammunition, major weapons, strategic stocks and standardised sustainment remain centrally managed. At the same time, military units increasingly receive funds and delegated authority to purchase technologies required for immediate operational tasks. Digital marketplaces such as DOT-Chain Defence and Brave1 Market allow individual units to choose systems, simultaneously boosting market competition and constant technological evolution, while Prozorro contributes to transparency. Codification procedures were also simplified and digitised to shorten the cycle between prototype development and supply to the end user.

1 Polina Istomina, Lesia Ogryzko, and Anastasiia Haievska, *Civil Society Role in Ukrainian Defence* (Sahaidachnyi Security Center, 2025), https://sahasec.org/research/civil-society-role-in-ukrainian-defence/.

2 "The Ministry of Defence Secured over $6 Billion for Ukraine's Defense Industry in 2025," *Ministry of Defence of Ukraine*, January 3, 2026, https://mod.gov.ua/en/news/the-ministry-of-defence-secured-over-6-billion-for-ukraine-s-defense-industry-in-2025; "Ukraine to Receive €1.3 Billion under the 'Danish Model' in 2025," *Ministry of Defence of Ukraine*, June 5, 2025, https://mod.gov.ua/en/news/ukraine-to-receive-1-3-billion-under-the-danish-model-in-2025.

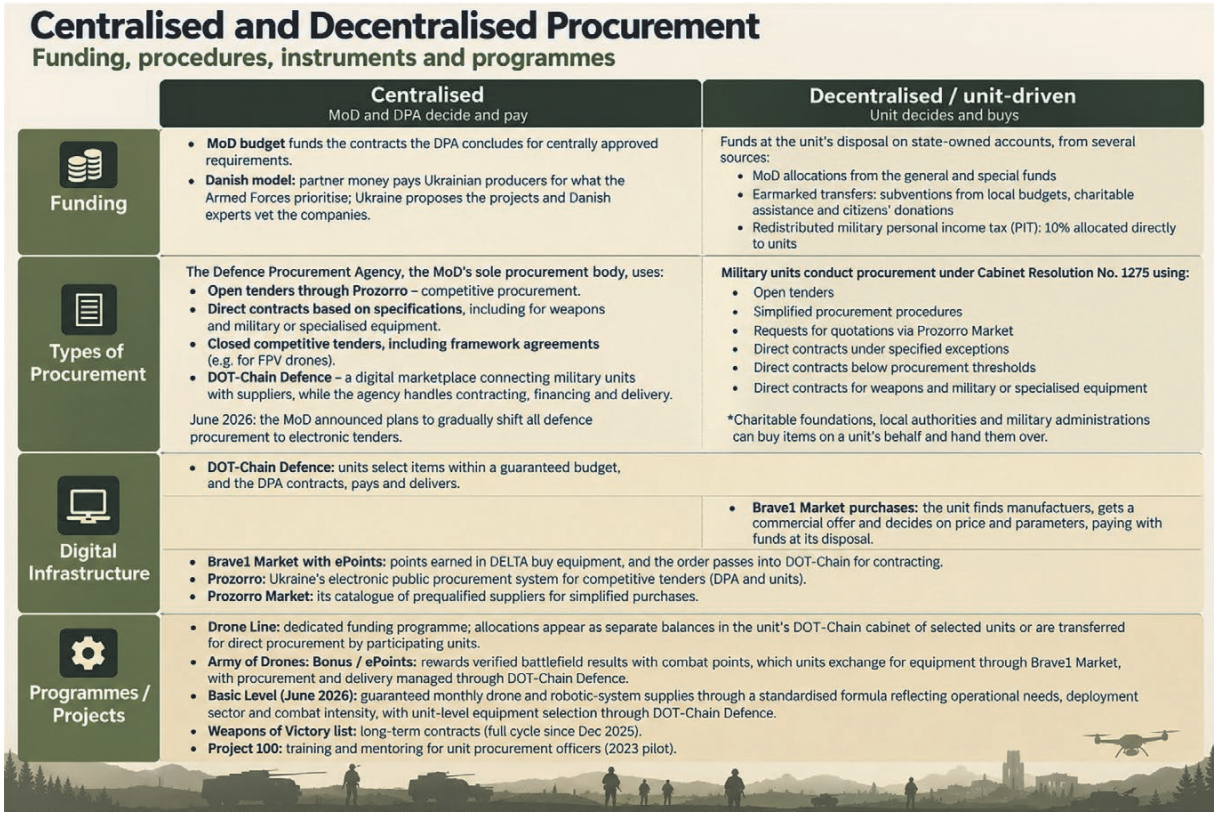


Figure 1. Centralised and Decentralised Procurement at a glance

These changes shortened the *invention–testing–feedback–improvement–procurement cycle* which is particularly important for drones and EW. A successful product can gain demand across combat units quickly, while purchasing decisions continuously reflect battlefield experience. The average delivery time for equipment in stock from the DOT-Chain Defence marketplace had fallen to approximately nine days by July 2026.[3]

Digitisation is in constant development. In March 2026, the Ukrainian MoD introduced a data-driven model for drone procurement, which links purchasing decisions directly to verified battlefield performance.[4] The model also divides funding between scale and experimentation: 80% is directed to solutions already proven in combat, while 20% is reserved for new technologies undergoing operational testing.

UK Relevance

These reforms are particularly relevant to the UK's own procurement challenges. Ukraine's reforms replaced a centralised, opaque and slow system with the same faults ("highly bureaucratic, overly stratified, far too ponderous") as those found by the House of Commons Defence Committee in the UK's own system in 2023.[5]

3 "Drone Contracts Totaling More than UAH 333 Billion Signed for the Military in the First Half of the Year," *Ministry of Defence of Ukraine*, July 17, 2026, https://mod.gov.ua/en/news/drone-contracts-totaling-more-than-uah-333-billion-signed-for-the-military-in-the-first-half-of-the-year; "Troops Have Placed $1 Billion in Orders in the First Year of Brave1 Market," *Ministry of Defence of Ukraine*, August 5, 2026, https://mod.gov.ua/en/news/troops-have-placed-1-billion-in-orders-in-the-first-year-of-brave1-market.

4 Ministry of Defence of Ukraine, "Ministry of Defence Changes Approach to Drone Procurement: Demand Will Be Generated Automatically Based on Frontline Data," *GOV.UA*, March 10, 2026, https://www.kmu.gov.ua/en/news/minoborony-zminiuie-pidkhid-do-zakupivel-droniv-potreba-formuvatymetsia-avtomatychno-na-osnovi-danykh-z-frontu.

5 House of Commons Defence Committee, *It is Broke – And it's Time to Fix It: The UK's Defence Procurement System* [HC 1099] (House of Commons, 2023), 3.

Table 1. Actors and instruments within Ukraine's procurement system

Centralised procurement	Decentralised / unit-driven procurement	External international mechanism	
		International procurement channels	*Financing and cooperation instruments related to production and procurement*
General Staff of the Armed Forces / Central Directorate for Defence Resources – Forms and submits the requirement: nomenclature, quantity and deadlines. **MoD** – Policy owner. Sets requirements and priorities, and exercises control and approval. Withdrawn from direct purchasing; retaining rule-setting and oversight. **Defence Procurement Agency (DPA)** – since 1 January 2026, it has served as the Ministry of Defence of Ukraine's sole centralised procurement body, buying weapons, ammunition, unmanned aerial vehicles (UAV), equipment, clothing, food and fuel under one point of responsibility. Single-window supplier interface since April 2025. **Logistics Forces Command** – Monitors contract execution and delivery; handles accounting, distribution and stock management.	**Direct procurement** by military units, using funds allocated by the MoD from the general and special funds; funding under dedicated programmes; subventions from local budgets; charitable assistance and citizens' donations; redistributed personal income tax (PIT) revenues. **Brave1 Market**, where a unit searches for manufacturers and sends requests directly. The unit receives a commercial offer and decides on price and parameters. Units may use ePoints to pay for purchases. **Equipment transfers by volunteers, charitable foundations and local communities**, in response to requests from military units. For direct procurement, military units use Prozorro and Prozorro Market, simplified or closed procurement procedures, and direct contracts where permitted under Resolution No. 1275. **Procurement officers in military units –** introduced as dedicated staff positions in December 2024, replacing the previous practice of assigning procurement duties to existing personnel and tender committees. **Procurement officers** in units (since late 2024) run the unit-level procurement cycle. **Unit technology centres and workshops** – repair, modify, test and in some cases produce equipment.	**NATO Support and Procurement Agency** – Ukraine joined in 2016; first trial purchase by the MoD in 2020.[6] **PURL** – NATO-coordinated list funded by partner contributions, primarily for US-origin systems. **Direct procurement by partner states** and the **Danish model** – allied funds contract directly with Ukrainian manufacturers.	**Frozen Russian asset proceeds** – over $1.1 bn to the defence industry in 2025. **European Defence Fund** – Accession agreement signed July 2026; on ratification Ukrainian firms gain access to joint R&D and grant funding.[7] **European Defence Industry Programme** – Financing agreement signed July 2026. **Security Action for Europe** – Ukrainian defence-industrial projects submitted with expected funding of $5 bn. **Localisation and joint ventures** – Build In Ukraine: foreign manufacturers producing inside Ukraine, Ukrainian know-how exported, Joint Ventures are formed. **Coalition for Resilient Procurement and Unified Support (CORPUS)**, April 2026 – Permanent cooperation between the DPA and the procurement agencies of Finland, Italy, Norway, Sweden and the UK.
Centralised instruments ensuring decentralisation: **Equipment selection through DOT-Chain Defence**: Military units select the items, while the DPA concludes contracts and pays for the goods, which are then delivered to the units. **Brave1 e-points (Army of Drones Bonus)** – the unit spends performance-based points in its Brave1 account, which passes the order to the DPA, which contracts and delivers. **Drone Line (presidential project)** – a set of brigades with significant dedicated funding from the state and international partners, distributed by the MoD.			

6 Illia Ponomarenko, "Ukraine's Defense Ministry Completes First Contract via NATO Procurement Agency," *Kyiv Post*, December 1, 2020, https://www.kyivpost.com/ukraine-politics/ukraines-defense-ministry-completes-first-contract-via-nato-procurement-agency.html.

7 Olha Pokotylo, "Ukrainian Defence Companies to Gain Access to EU Funding Programmes, Including €300m Ukraine Support Instrument," *The Defender*, July 16, 2026, https://thedefender.media/en/2026/07/ukraine-edf-usi/.

2. Four Principal Centralised Procurement Mechanisms: Open Competition, Closed Competition, Direct Contracting and Digital Marketplaces

DPA uses four principal mechanisms depending on the type of materiel being purchased, the degree to which the military requirement is already specified, the number of potential suppliers and the sensitivity of the information involved. These are *(i) open tenders through Prozorro*,[8] *(ii) closed competitive tenders*, *(iii) direct contracting against a defined specification*, and *(iv) the DOT-Chain Defence digital marketplace*.

i. **Open tenders through Prozorro** are used primarily for parts of the non-lethal portfolio, dual-use goods and some standardised military supplies. The advantages are price discovery and transparency.

ii. **Closed competitive tenders** are used primarily for weapons, ammunition, UAVs, EW systems and military equipment that inherently require a high level of industrial capacity or specific and sophisticated manufacturing capability, or where the sensitivity of the capability or tactical requirement prevents an open tender.

iii. **Direct contracting against a defined specification** is used when the General Staff identifies a specific type, model or product rather than a set of performance requirements.

iv. **DOT-Chain Defence introduces a different procurement logic.**[9] This online market platform is designed primarily for categories in which operational requirements and technological performance change particularly quickly.[10] By August 2026, units could order UAVs, EW equipment, ground robotic systems, ammunition and payloads for unmanned systems. The model has been structured around framework contractual arrangements, which allow individual unit orders to be placed against an existing contractual relationship rather than requiring a new state procurement procedure for every brigade purchase. For Armed Forces of Ukraine units, the MoD establishes the overall financial envelope for procurement through the marketplace, while the General Staff distributes the allocated funds among participating units according to operational priorities. Each participating unit therefore receives its own guaranteed budget in the system, visible in its DOT-Chain cabinet, and can

8 Prozorro is Ukraine's electronic public procurement system, developed after the 2014 Revolution of Dignity as part of a broader anti-corruption reform designed to replace opaque state purchasing with open competition and the principle that "everyone sees everything".

9 "DOT-CHAIN," Defense Procurement Agency, accessed September 10, 2026, https://dot.gov.ua/en/page/dot-chain.

10 "DOT-Chain Defence: Enhancing Autonomy for Brigades and Reducing Bureaucracy," *Ministry of Defence of Ukraine*, September 24, 2025, https://mod.gov.ua/en/news/dot-chain-defense-enhancing-autonomy-for-brigades-and-reducing-bureaucracy.

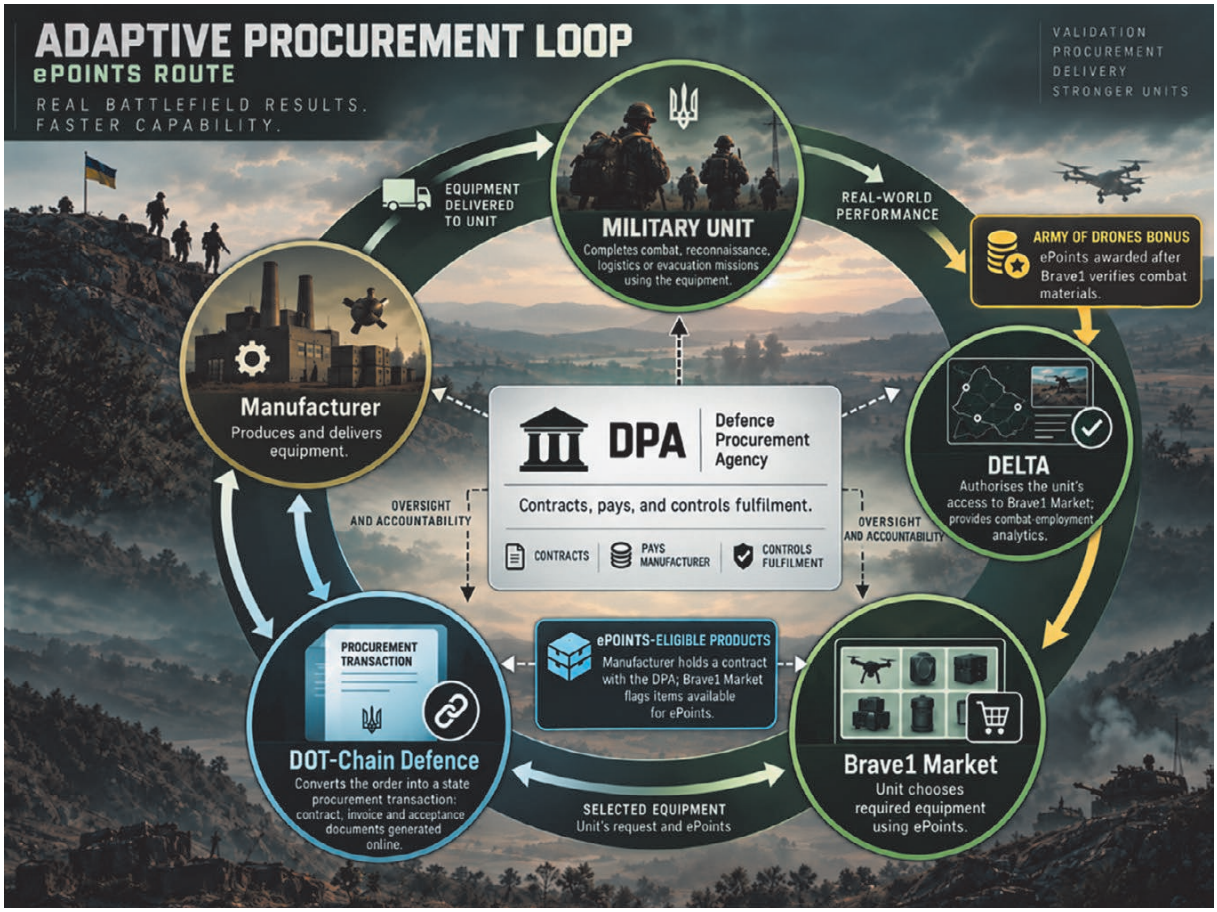


Figure 2. The ePoints chain: from verified battlefield results to delivered equipment (Source: Sahaidachnyi Security Centre)

use that allocation to select particular systems, munitions or other available equipment that best meet its operational requirements. Since October 2025, the Ministry of Internal Affairs, in co-operation with the Ministry of Defence, has piloted National Guard procurement through DOT-Chain, allowing participating frontline units to order equipment using ePoints earned under Army of Drones Bonus.

The most developed example of this architecture is *Army of Drones: Bonus/еБали*, which links three separate digital systems into one procurement chain. The *DELTA* battlefield management system records and verifies battlefield results, which are translated into combat points (e-Points); *Brave1 Market* converts these combat points into a choice of equipment; *DOT-Chain Defence* turns that choice into a state-funded procurement transaction. By June 2026, more than 400 combat units had joined the ePoints programme integrated with Brave1 Market, ordering more than 500,000 UAVs, ground robotic systems, and EW and reconnaissance assets, through combat points, with the value of equipment ordered through the programme exceeding USD 735 million.[11] Alongside this performance-based

11 "Over 500,000 Drones Ordered by the Military through Brave1 Market Using Combat Points," *Ministry of Defence of Ukraine*, June 24, 2026, https://mod.gov.ua/en/news/over-500-000-drones-ordered-by-the-military-through-brave1-market-using-combat-points.

channel, every brigade with battalions deployed on the frontline also receives a fixed, flat-rate monthly allocation, to prevent units in quieter sectors from being penalised for a lack of combat opportunities.[12] In addition, in June 2026, the Ministry of Defence introduced the Basic Level programme, which guarantees minimum monthly supplies of drones, calculated according to operational needs and combat intensity. Units select eligible equipment through DOT-Chain Defence, while procurement and delivery remain centrally managed.

UK Relevance

For the UK, the essential point is that DOT-Chain is centrally contracted and unit-chosen: delegation of choice and central control of contracting, price and eligibility are not alternatives but two halves of the same design.

12 Arsen Zhumadilov and Julian Le Grand, "Markets at War: The Procurement of Ukrainian Drones," *The Political Quarterly* (2026), https://doi.org/10.1111/1467-923x.70124.

3. Military Unit Impact on Procurement Through Supply-Shaping: Battlefield Testing, R&D and Production

Military units shape Ukraine's procurement system in three distinct ways. Firstly, they generate operational requirements and technical feedback, which move through the chain of command and ultimately influence the requirements and specifications consolidated by the General Staff. Secondly, combat units increasingly exercise direct purchasing authority through Prozorro and Prozorro Market, simplified or closed procurement procedures, and direct contracts where permitted under Resolution No. 1275, while also selecting equipment through Brave1 Market and placing orders under centralised procurement through DOT-Chain Defence. These individual orders and aggregated demand provide the state and manufacturers with valuable data on which products are being selected and used at the front. Thirdly, and more unusually, some military formations have become *developers, engineering organisations, testing centres and, in certain cases, producers of military technology themselves*.



Figure 3. Procurement routes for Ukrainian military units

The origins of this model were highly decentralised. During the first years of the full-scale invasion, technically capable personnel inside brigades repaired commercial drones, modified communications equipment, assembled first-person view (FPV) systems, adapted munitions and wrote software, because the equipment reaching them often required further work before it could survive battlefield conditions. In stronger units, these improvised teams gradually became permanent workshops and then technology centres. The evolution of the Third Assault Brigade's NOVA Technology Centre illustrates this process particularly well. The brigade began developing an internal R&D capability around UAVs, unmanned ground vehicles, EW, communications, counter-UAS technologies, ammunition and software in 2023.[13]

Military units possess information that manufacturers struggle to reproduce on a civilian test site. Military feedback therefore affects the architecture of the product rather than simply confirming whether its nominal technical characteristics have been achieved. As one Ukrainian UAS commander explained in 2026, an engineering solution designed around a 30-minute set-up procedure may have little value at a launch site where the crew has approximately two minutes to deploy, operate and relocate.[14]

Some formations have consequently institutionalised their relationships with industry. In 2026, the Third Army Corps launched AB3.Tech, a civil-military defence-technology platform designed to move technologies from battlefield testing and pilot deployment through joint R&D, adaptation and eventual scaling.[15] Some formations have moved further and established their own production capacity. By September 2025, *ArmyInform* reported that the 414th Separate Unmanned Systems Brigade, Magyar's Birds, was producing around 20,000 drone-dropped munitions per month for use by operators in more than 120 Defence Forces units.[16] Such cases are exceptional in scale, yet they demonstrate that a combat formation can become simultaneously a battlefield user, technical authority, producer and distributor.

This capability brings an obvious operational advantage. A unit can redesign a component as soon as Russian countermeasures appear, test it against the same threat and introduce the change without waiting for an entirely new central procurement cycle. It also creates significant institutional questions around safety certification, ammunition accounting, quality assurance, funding, liability and responsibility for configuration control.

UK Relevance

For the UK, these unit workshops and corps technology centres generate the knowledge of what a system must survive; they, rather than ministries in Kyiv, should be the prime points of contact for learning.[17]

13 Viktoriia Osipova, "What It Takes to Launch R&D and Develop Technology in the Third Assault Brigade," *DOU*, October 31, 2024, https://dou.ua/lenta/interviews/nova-technology-centre/.

14 Kateryna Amelina, "How Manufacturers and the Military Are Looking for Solutions for High-Quality and Fast Feedback and Collaboration," *LB.ua*, July 27, 2026, https://lb.ua/society/2026/07/27/754292_yak_virobniki_viyskovi_shukayut.html.

15 Iryna Levytska, "Manufacturers Will Work with Third Corps Military: AB3.Tech Launches Defence Cluster," *Oboronka/Mezha*, June 4, 2026, https://oboronka.mezha.ua/ab3-tech-zapuskaye-klaster-oboronnih-tehnologiy-311968/.

16 "Projects," Birds of the Magyar, accessed September 12, 2026, https://magyarbirds.army/projects; "414th Unmanned Systems Brigade 'Birds of Magyar': Hunt the Enemy Quickly and Stealthily, Like a Turul," *ArmyInform*, September 26, 2025, https://armyinform.com.ua/2025/09/26/414-ta-brygada-bezpilotnyh-system-ptahy-madyara-polyuj-na-voroga-strimko-j-nepomitno-yak-turul/.

17 Colonel Rivo Meimer and Dr Jade McGlynn, *The Gap* [closed-circulation briefing] (CSNS, King's College London, 2026).

4. Procurement Officers as a New Military Function

The expansion of unit-level procurement required professional procurement capacity inside combat formations. In late 2024, the Ukrainian MoD introduced a dedicated procurement officer function across military units, separating procurement from commanders' and other service members' operational duties, replacing the previous practice of assigning procurement duties to existing personnel and tender committees.[18] The officer manages the procurement cycle from requirements planning and market research to supplier identification, preparation of tender documentation, evaluation of offers, contracting and reporting.[19]

Professionalisation has developed alongside the new position. Project 100, launched in 2024, provides procurement personnel with five to seven months of remote training built around weekly sessions, webinars, practical cases and individual mentoring.[20] Participants work on their unit's actual procurements rather than simulated exercises. The programme is supported through NATO's Comprehensive Assistance Package within the NATO–Ukraine Strategic Defence Procurement Review and overseen with support from the UK Special Defence Adviser team. By August 2026, it had extended to 707 procurement specialists from 411 military units.

Overall, unit-level procurement autonomy in Ukraine operates along a spectrum.

- In the **marketplace model**, two parallel procurement channels exist. Under centralised procurement, units choose systems and quantities through DOT-Chain Defence, while the DPA contracts suppliers, processes payments and oversees delivery. This mechanism also serves specialised initiatives, including Drone Line, and provides targeted supplies alongside standard centralised allocations. Under decentralised procurement, units use Brave1 Market to select equipment and purchase it directly from manufacturers using funds on designated accounts. Since August 2026, they can also place competitive orders for customised drones based on technical specifications. The two channels intersect under Army of Drones Bonus, where units redeem ePoints earned for verified combat and operational results through Brave1 Market, while the DPA manages centrally funded procurement and delivery through DOT-Chain Defence.

18 "The Role of Authorized Procurement Officer Has Been Established within the Armed Forces of Ukraine, according to an Order from the Ministry of Defence," *Ministry of Defence of Ukraine*, December 4, 2024, https://mod.gov.ua/en/news/the-role-of-authorized-procurement-officer-has-been-established-within-the-armed-forces-of-ukraine-according-to-an-order-from-the-ministry-of-defence.

19 Reform Support Office of the Ministry of Defence of Ukraine and Defence Procurement Reform Project, *Guidebook for Authorized Persons for the Procurement of Goods, Works and Services in Military Units of the Armed Forces of Ukraine*, 2nd ed. (2025), https://dzplatforma.com.ua/files/2025/10.2025/manual_for_procurement2025.pdf.

20 "Project 100," Defence Procurement Reform Project, Army PRO, accessed September 11, 2026, https://www.army-pro.com/education/proyekt-100/.

- Greater autonomy applies when **units act as contracting authorities** themselves, using allocations under their spending plans, dedicated programme funding, the 10% military-PIT mechanism, earmarked subventions from local budgets and charitable contributions credited to their accounts; authorised procurement officers can use open tenders, simplified procurement, Prozorro Market, applicable restricted procedures and direct contracting where statutory grounds are met, with payments executed through the State Treasury.

- **Local communities, charitable foundations and volunteer organisations** procure equipment on units' behalf and transfer it in kind or, in the case of communities, provide defence subventions through the state-budget system; here the unit can define the requirement but does not control contracting or payment.

UK Relevance
For the UK, unit-level procurement officers are a necessary precondition for any delegation: a marketplace needs informed buyers.

5. Adjusting Codification Procedures: Digitalisation and Accelerated Pathways

The process of codification – the formal conversion of a new product into an item of supply eligible for use in the defence forces – has also been substantially accelerated and digitised during the war. Ukraine applies the NATO Codification System and has held Tier 2 status since 2019, giving it full participation in the system, including the right to assign NATO Stock Numbers (NSN). The MoD's *Window for Weapons and Military Equipment Manufacturers* is the central digital entry point for preparing and submitting new weapons and military-equipment products for codification. The service combines procedural guidance, document templates, category-specific requirements and electronic submission in one interface. Products can now be codified before a procurement requirement exists, incremental modifications can retain an existing NSN, and a complete application can receive an NSN within ten days after documentation and testing are complete.

UK Relevance

For the UK, the lesson is proportionality: for consumable systems, the producer's own quality certificate can be sufficient, with responsibility for quality resting on the producer.

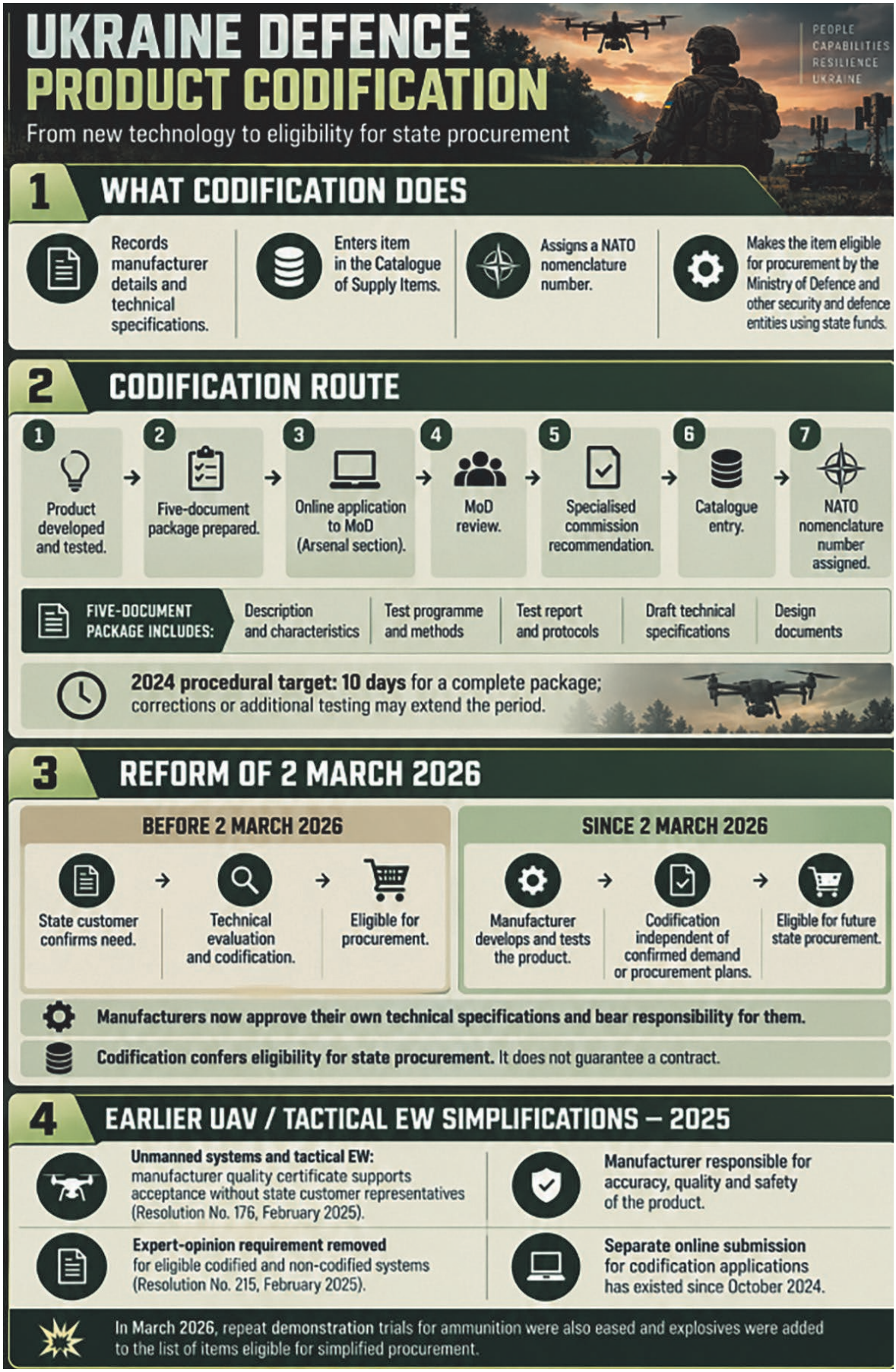


Figure 4. Ukrainian defence product codification: how a new system enters the supply chain (Source: Sahaidachnyi Security Centre)

6. Remaining Problems: From Procurement Speed to System Coherence

Ukraine has substantially shortened the route from battlefield demand to contract, but the next stage of reform concerns what is procured, how different systems fit together, and what happens after delivery.

The first problem is the growing technological *zoo*. In April 2025, the MoD had already reported that the Armed Forces operated dozens of FPV systems with broadly similar tactical and technical characteristics but with different platforms, payloads, software and components.[21] This creates a case for modular standardisation rather than product standardisation.

A second problem is the gap between declared technical characteristics and actual battlefield performance. Codification establishes that a product has specified characteristics and creates a legal route into military procurement, but contemporary drone effectiveness can change considerably with the operating environment. The MoD itself acknowledged this problem in March 2026 when it shifted UAV requirement formation towards data from єБали, DOT-Chain Defence, Brave1 Market, DELTA and Mission Control. The reform effectively introduces a distinction between technical compliance and combat effectiveness.

Finally, procurement increasingly has to treat technical support as part of the product. General Cherry provides a useful example. According to co-founder Stanislav Hryshyn, approximately 93% of technical-support requests received by the company could be resolved through configuration or settings; the company consequently developed mobile teams that work with units and feed operational problems directly back into production and R&D.[22] In an acquisition system built around rapid iteration, delivery completes only the first part of the procurement cycle; battlefield use, support, performance data and modification determine whether the capability remains effective.

UK Relevance

For the UK, which has yet to build its marketplace, these are design requirements rather than problems to be discovered later: modular standards, performance-based specifications and support written into the contract from the first purchase.

21 "Valerii Churkin: The Ministry of Defence Is Guiding Weapons Manufacturers toward Unified Standards in Unmanned Systems Production," *Ministry of Defence of Ukraine*, April 4, 2025, https://mod.gov.ua/en/news/valerii-churkin-the-ministry-of-defence-is-guiding-weapons-manufacturers-toward-unified-standards-in-unmanned-systems-production.

22 Militarnyi, "Drone Feedback, Procurement Systems, and Export Prospects — Stanislav Hryshyn, General Cherry," February 3, 2026, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=z0ePJmtKsFM.

7. Where the UK Stands

Whether or not in direct response to the defence procurement lessons learned by Ukraine, recent UK defence procurement reforms have tracked some, but not all, of these developments. While some of these reforms demonstrate a conceptual learning of some of the lessons from Ukraine, actual implementation is often nascent and a work-in-progress.

A British idea, applied in Ukraine. The Ukrainian marketplace is rooted in British domestic policy innovations. As Arsen Zhumadilov, then-Director of the DPA, and Julian Le Grand describe, DOT-Chain is a quasi-market of the kind introduced into British education, health and social care from the 1990s: the state remains the payer, the user chooses, and independent providers compete for the user's choice.[23] Zhumadilov encountered these ideas at the London School of Economics and applied them in 2025 to a system whose faults closely resembled those which the House of Commons Defence Committee identified in the UK in 2023, when it called for procurement to be aligned "more clearly with responsibility, to actually empower those who need to deliver change to do so".[24] The UK diagnosed the problem; Ukraine applied a British remedy to it; the UK has yet to apply that remedy to itself.

Convergence: speed, channels, and small and medium-sized enterprises (SME). Where UK developments, or at least stated policies, most closely parallel those in Ukraine are in emphasising a need for increased speed of procurement, the use of multiple procurement channels (and associated project timelines) for different types of platforms, and the promotion of SMEs in defence supply chains. The 2025 Strategic Defence Review (SDR) further divided procurement into three categories: major platforms, spiral and modular upgrades, and rapid commercial exploitation, with the latter intended to contract within three months. Defence Equipment & Support (DE&S) announced its new *segmented* approach to procurement in March 2026. The Defence Industrial Strategy established an Office for Small Business Growth and sought to reduce barriers for SMEs and startups. This again however is nascent, and UK defence spending remains highly concentrated: in 2024/25, only 4% of direct MoD expenditure went to SMEs.

Separation: delegation and data. The greatest divergence between innovative Ukrainian procurement processes and the UK reforms lies in the delegation of greater procurement authority to individual units. In contrast to the Ukrainian approach, the UK's Integrated Procurement Model, along with the institutional reforms that established the National Armaments Directorate and UK Defence Innovation, seeks stronger integration and central strategic direction, addressing fragmentation and duplication rather than reproducing Ukraine's more decentralised purchasing

23 Zhumadilov and Le Grand, "Markets at War."
24 House of Commons Defence Committee, *It is Broke*, 3.

model. The UK has not moved towards a Ukrainian-style digital marketplace, which would give brigades or battalions a level of autonomy over certain procurement decisions. The UK's proposed Digital Targeting Web has the potential to capture operational and training data which can then be used to drive procurement decisions. However, this architecture is still in development, and the UK armed forces do not currently have a data-capture platform analogous to DELTA that feeds directly into procurement processes. Ukraine has the data, obtained at brutal cost. The UK does not. Ukrainian data is available through Brave1 Market and Avengers Lab, but in each case is limited in scope. Battlefield data is collected in various forms by different Ukrainian units, and the UK currently has no structured route to it.

Two conditions the UK does not yet meet. Zhumadilov and Le Grand identify two conditions on which a procurement quasi-market depends: well-informed consumers who know what they need, and several competing suppliers with few barriers to entry.[25] In Ukraine the brigade is the informed buyer, supported by its procurement officer. UK brigades hold neither the delegated budget nor the procurement and technical expertise to play that role. On the supply side, DOT-Chain listed 228 suppliers offering more than 820 products by June 2026; a UK small-UAS market in which 4% of direct spend reaches SMEs does not yet offer the competition on which the model relies. Both conditions can be built in peacetime. Indeed, the short routes need to be built during peacetime, because adjusting under fire costs lives.[26]

A number of officials will raise objections or fears of overlearning the lessons from the Ukraine. Below, we anticipate and address these objections.

1. The UK is not at war and has no combat data on which to base an ePoints-style system. Ukraine's own design answers this: alongside the performance-based channel, every deployed brigade receives a flat-rate monthly allocation which requires no combat data at all, and a UK marketplace can begin on that basis, with exercise and training data feeding a performance channel later.[27]
2. Delegation fragments the inventory, which is what the National Armaments Director exists to prevent; however, DOT-Chain is centrally contracted: the DPA qualifies suppliers, holds the framework contracts, and controls price and eligibility, while units choose within that catalogue, so central control of contracting and delegated choice coexist.
3. Delegated budgets sit uneasily with public-money accountability. A digital marketplace with a per-order audit trail is more transparent than the ad hoc urgent-requirement mechanisms on which the UK currently relies; the deeper problem is that the UK system penalises decisions and errors but never delays, so an official who defers or refers upwards is behaving rationally.[28]

25 Zhumadilov and Le Grand, "Markets at War."
26 Meimer and McGlynn, *The Gap*.
27 Zhumadilov and Le Grand, "Markets at War."
28 Meimer and McGlynn, *The Gap*.

4. Safety and airworthiness. For UAVs and tactical EW, Ukraine accepts the manufacturer's own quality certificate as sufficient documentation, with the producer bearing responsibility. This is a proportionate standard for systems the SDR itself expects to be consumed rather than sustained.

The reform has had a political price, and the UK should expect the same. The defence minister who championed the system left office in July 2026, and his departure has been linked in part to his support for it; Zhumadilov himself left the DPA the following month.[29] Reforms that hand purchasing power to users take it from intermediaries, and intermediaries resist. DOT-Chain also supplies only 10–50% of brigade equipment depending on category: it is a complementary channel for fast-moving technologies, not a replacement for central supply, which is what makes it compatible with the UK's centralising reforms.

29 Zhumadilov and Le Grand, "Markets at War."

8. Recommendations for the UK MoD

The aim is not to reproduce Ukrainian practice wholesale, but to make Britain's own systems faster, more adaptable and better connected to operational evidence.[30] Each recommendation below is falsifiable and measurable.

A. **Build the informed buyer.** The Army should establish a procurement officer role at brigade level, separate from command duties, together with a reservist technical trade that sits with the units flying the systems, with the authority and the parts to rebuild, reconfigure and modify before issue.[31] Training should be modelled on Project 100, the curriculum of which the UK already helps to oversee. Measure: track the number of days from a specialist applying to standing in post, published annually.

B. **Build the competitive supply side.** Qualify suppliers once for each category into an open pool, where they can compete with each order. The pool stays open, so a firm founded in the previous year can still sell in the current year.[32] On the accelerated track, direct 70% of funding to solutions already proven in combat, and reserve 30% for systems under operational test: Ukraine's own split is 80/20, but the UK, not being at war, has latitude to weight the balance further towards systems under test. Measure: record the number of qualified suppliers per category, and the SME share of direct spend, published annually against a target.

C. **Open a centrally contracted, unit-chosen marketplace.** Within the SDR's rapid commercial exploitation segment, DE&S should hold framework contracts with the pre-qualified pool, and give brigades and uncrewed systems formations a visible, ringfenced allocation to spend on defined consumable categories – small UAS, counter-UAS, tactical EW, ground robotics and payloads. Begin with a flat-rate allocation on the Ukrainian hygienic model; add a performance channel as exercise and operational data allow. The Uncrewed Systems Centre is one natural candidate to own requirement, experimentation, procurement, training and counter-drone defence together, as *The Gap* has proposed.[33] Measure: track the median days from unit order to delivery.

D. **Set a decision clock.** No proposal below the level needing a minister's signature should sit longer than 30 days on any single desk. At 30 days it should automatically move up the chain and the delay should be recorded against the office that sat on it. Below the de minimis threshold, a faster, 14-day lane based on a one-page case can be applied.[34] Measure: keep records of the number of proposals escalated, by office, published annually.

30 Meimer and McGlynn, *The Gap*.
31 Meimer and McGlynn, *The Gap*.
32 Meimer and McGlynn, *The Gap*.
33 Meimer and McGlynn, *The Gap*.
34 Meimer and McGlynn, *The Gap*.

E. **Specify the conditions, buy the support.** Performance standards for uncrewed and counter-uncrewed systems should be derived from what Ukrainian and Russian frontline labs test against: the jamming a system meets; the frequencies it loses; the repair it needs after ten sorties.[35] Specifications describe the conditions the system must survive, not the product. Tender evaluation in the rapid segment should score service capacity alongside price, and the spending ratios on training, spares, components, repairs and platforms should be published for every uncrewed purchase.[36] The MoD should also publish a modular open architecture for small UAS and tactical EW, and make it a condition of marketplace entry, to prevent a UK *zoo* from forming.

F. **Learn from the front, not the capital.** Almost all UK engagement with Ukraine runs through Kyiv.[37] Technical and procurement personnel should be placed with Ukrainian units, corps technology centres and repair labs on rotation, with Ukrainian consent and through Ukrainian commanders, and with structured debriefs for British nationals working in eastern Ukraine. CORPUS, in which the UK sits alongside Ukraine's DPA, should be used to exchange marketplace design, compliance practice and, where possible, data. Measure: record the personnel days spent with Ukrainian units against personnel days spent in Kyiv.

35 Meimer and McGlynn, *The Gap*.
36 Meimer and McGlynn, *The Gap*.
37 Meimer and McGlynn, *The Gap*.

Conclusion

Ukraine's procurement transformation began with institutional failure under extreme pressure, which forced improvised solutions. In 2022, volunteers bought what the state could not deliver quickly enough. Soldiers modified what they received. Four years later, these parallel improvisations are becoming a harmonised and digitised architecture.

While many in the UK still believe that NATO would not fight in the same way as the Ukrainians in a future conflict with Russia, the new generation of warfare will not wait for unmodernised doctrines and processes. Recent exercises have repeatedly exposed this adaptation gap. During Hedgehog 2025, a multinational military exercise in Estonia, a team of roughly ten Ukrainian drone specialists acting as the opposing force reportedly mock-destroyed 17 armoured vehicles and conducted another 30 strikes in roughly half a day.[38] In Combined Resolve 2026 in Germany, Ukraine's 412th Separate Unmanned Systems Brigade, Nemesis, rapidly located and struck US armoured formations; US vehicles were reportedly *respawned* to keep the exercise running.[39]

This makes decentralised procurement a structural requirement rather than a wartime exception. Units require purchasing autonomy primarily for rapidly obsolescent capabilities such as UAS and EW, while centralised procurement remains more efficient for heavy platforms, aircraft, air defence and ammunition. Effective decentralisation therefore requires efficient digital compliance and reporting, and professional procurement personnel at unit level. In the UK and Europe, however, major weapons procurement remains centralised, relying on ad hoc urgent operational requirement mechanisms to plug gaps as they arise. Such an approach is unlikely to survive contact with the enemy.

38 Jillian Kay Melchior, "NATO Has Seen the Future and Is Unprepared," *Wall Street Journal*, February 12, 2026, https://www.wsj.com/opinion/nato-has-seen-the-future-and-is-unprepared-887eaf0f.

39 Alistair MacDonald, Lara Seligman, and Daniel Michaels, "U.S. and Ukrainian Forces Went Head-to-Head in an Exercise. Ukraine's Drones Won," *Wall Street Journal*, August 13, 2026, https://www.wsj.com/politics/national-security/u-s-and-ukrainian-forces-went-head-to-head-in-an-exercise-ukraines-drones-won-cc3663d5.

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