

Ukraine didn't ask us to reopen Kyiv embassy, says Pat Conroy

Україна не просила нас відкрити посольство в Києві, – каже П. Конрой

Міністр оборонної промисловості Австралії П. Конрой відкинув критику рішення Австралії залишити своє посольство в Києві закритим, незважаючи на те, що країни-союзники знову відкрили свої, на знак солідарності з Україною проти вторгнення росії.

Високопоставлений дипломат, якому міністерство не уповноважило виступати публічно, сказав, що це «повний жарг»: Австралія не відновила свою місію, і що міжнародні союзники будуть дивуватися, якщо бачитимуть, що країна надає оборонне обладнання, але не підтверджує готовність повернутися в країну. Посол України в Австралії В. Мирошниченко заявив, що Австралія пропускає ключові брифінги розвідки, які проводяться лише особисто через відсутність посла в країні, але П. Конрой назвав причиною неспівзвучності Австралії відновити дипмісію в Києві занепокоєння безпекою.

<https://www.smh.com.au/world/europe/ukraine-didn-t-ask-us-to-reopen-kyiv-embassy-says-pat-conroy-20230219-p5clr7.html>

Defence Industry Minister Pat Conroy has brushed aside criticism of Australia's decision to keep its embassy in Kyiv closed, despite allied countries reopening theirs, as a sign of solidarity with Ukraine against Russia's invasion.

A senior diplomat not authorised by the department to speak publicly told this masthead last week that it was a "total joke" Australia had not reopened its mission and that it would bemuse international allies to see the country provide defence equipment but not back that up with a preparedness to return to the country.

Speaking to The Sydney Morning Herald and The Age on the sidelines of the Munich Security Conference that wrapped up in the German city on Sunday, Conroy said the issue had not been raised with him during a meeting he held with Ukraine's Deputy Defence Minister Volodymyr Havrylov.

"It wasn't something he asked me about," Conroy said.

A total 67 of the 81 diplomatic missions that left the war-torn Ukrainian capital have now reopened including Australia's AUKUS allies, Britain and the United States.

'Total joke': DFAT and ambassador at odds over return to Ukraine

But Conroy said that during his meeting, the Ukrainians were focused on Australia's defence assistance not its diplomatic footprint.

"What they're very focused on is how we're assisting them and have assisted them and how we can support them into the future, that's what they really focused on," he said.

Ukraine's ambassador in Australia Vasyl Myroshnychenko has said Australia is missing out on key intelligence briefings that are given only in-person by not having an ambassador in the country, but Conroy cited security concerns as the reason for Australia's timidity to resume operations in Kyiv.

"There was a good discussion in the Senate estimates late last year about what's driven our approach and it's probably not for me to comment on that, that's more in the land of Foreign Minister [Penny] Wong," he said.

Conroy also held meetings with counterparts from the Netherlands, Germany, Norway, India, Ukraine, Singapore, Japan and Sweden while in Munich, where he pushed the message to not lose focus on the Indo-Pacific.

Russia and Iran were barred from this year's gathering but China's chief diplomat Wang Yi used his platform to berate the United States as "hysterical" for shooting down the suspected Chinese spy balloon over its airspace.

He also refused to rule out imminent military escalation over Taiwan, which Beijing has vowed to reunify.

Conroy described the speech as an “interesting contribution”.

“It’s probably not helpful for me to be contributing to this debate on Taiwan,” he said.

He said he had encouraged the Europeans to keep up their engagement in the region, citing Germany’s involvement in the Pitch Black military training exercise in the Northern Territory last year alongside French, British and US air forces.

German Defence Minister Boris Pistorius, who lunched with Conroy in Munich, said his country would support, but not get involved, if conflict broke out in the Indo-Pacific.

“What we can do is assist them in any way and therefore it’s very important that we exercise together to show presence, to show solidarity and understanding in that mission.

“A military intervention by German troops I would rather not see in the Pacific, but assistance, solidarity, support for sanctions and political action in the UN – every time,” he said.

Pistorius said the Americans had already begun focusing more on the Indo-Pacific, which had implications for Europe.

Pistorius said he had been requested by the Singaporeans to attend this year’s Shangri-La Dialogue in Singapore in early June. The meeting is Asia’s premiere defence gathering and has long been overlooked by Germany. Prime Minister Anthony Albanese will be keynote speaker.