Germany and the US will send armoured fighting vehicles to Ukraine, the White House said, in a move that will deliver a big boost to Kyiv’s offensive capabilities.

The deliveries mark a significant shift for Germany’s chancellor Olaf Scholz, who has been reluctant to provide Ukraine with heavy weaponry amid fears it could drag Nato into the war.

Scholz spoke by phone with US president Joe Biden on Thursday to co-ordinate the two governments’ positions. The US agreed to send Bradley fighting vehicles, while Germany is providing Marder infantry fighting vehicles and will also join the US in sending a Patriot missile battery to Kyiv.

Robert Habeck, the German economy minister and deputy chancellor, said it was a “good decision”. “Ever since the war began we have expanded our support, in close co-ordination with our partners,” he said. “It’s logical that we also take this step. Ukraine has the right to defend itself against the Russian attack, and we have a duty to help it.”

Scholz and Biden in a statement “expressed their common determination to continue to provide the necessary financial, humanitarian, military and diplomatic support to Ukraine for as long as needed”.

As part of this effort, “the United States intends to supply Ukraine with Bradley infantry fighting vehicles, and Germany intends to provide Ukraine with Marder infantry fighting vehicles. Both countries plan to train Ukrainian forces on the respective systems,” the statement said.

Pressure on Scholz to shift position has grown since Emmanuel Macron, president of France, agreed to supply AMX-10s “tank killers” to the Ukrainian armed forces — a move billed by the Élysée Palace as the first delivery of western-made tanks to the country.

“Scholz was forced to act after Macron pressed ahead,” said one person familiar with the discussions.

The Bradley infantry fighting vehicles will be included in a new package of lethal assistance for Ukraine to be announced on Friday, Pentagon press secretary Brigadier General Pat Ryder said.

“It is an armoured capability that can transport mechanised infantry into battle in support of both offensive and defensive operations providing a level of firepower and armour that will bring advantages on the battlefield,” he said.

The US would train Ukrainian forces on how to operate and maintain the vehicles, Ryder said.

Kyiv has long been calling for tanks and other lethal aid as it faces a grinding and slow battle across a long front line in the country’s east. Armoured vehicles can play an important role in helping Ukrainian forces conduct combined arms manoeuvres as Russia and Ukraine are fighting for small gains on a heavily dug-in area.

Kyiv has continued to ask for Nato-standard modern battle tanks, such as the US-made Abrams or the German-made Leopard 2, but officials have held off over concerns about escalation with Russia and the logistics associated with maintaining them.

But the provision of infantry fighting vehicles still represents a big change in policy. Earlier on Thursday, Habeck said the German government had “always tailored our support for the Ukrainian army to the situation”.