

Macron surges French military budget while slashing pensions

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11 April 2023

French President Emmanuel Macron has triggered a political crisis by ramming through his deep pension cuts in the face of overwhelming popular opposition. He falsely claimed that there is not enough money for pensions. However, with his call to build a European “war economy,” it is evermore evident that Macron’s pension cuts aim to fund a massive diversion of resources from workers and retirees to the military machine for a global war that is being prepared behind the backs of the people.

Last week, Sébastien Lecornu, the Minister of the Armed Forces, presented to the Council of Ministers the Military Programming Law (LPM) for 2024-2030. The budget of the armed forces would increase by €3.1 billion in 2024, then by €3 billion per year from 2025 to 2027. It is expected to increase by €4 billion per year from 2028. As Macron announced in January, the future LPM raises the total budget for the armed forces to €413 billion over seven years. The military budget would reach €69 billion in 2030, compared to €32 billion in 2017.

Five billion euros would be invested in drones, €49 billion in equipment maintenance, €5 billion in intelligence and counter-intelligence, €13 billion for overseas operations, and €16 billion to build up ammunition stocks. Macron also wants to spend around €6 billion and €4 billion on the development of the space and cyber warfare, respectively.

The French Defense Ministry openly declares that it is preparing for large-scale war that would lead to massive casualties. It states, “the 2024-2030 Military Programming Law will allow us to adapt our armies’ capacities to be ready for a major, high-intensity conflict. It goes from modernizing our equipment to building a war economy.”

The army is to receive more Scorpion armored

vehicles and Caesar heavy artillery, as well as several types of helicopters. The Air and Space Force will continue to buy more Rafale jets and also strengthen its strategic transport fleet.

The LPM also includes building a new aircraft carrier to replace the current Charles-de-Gaulle carrier. Lecornu told *Le Parisien*: “It is a cathedral of technology and human skill weighing 75,000 tons: a factory on water stuffed with steam, electronics and nuclear energy. A small airport on water of 2,000 sailors with fighter planes and installed atop two small nuclear power plants. There are only two countries in the world who know how to build and deploy nuclear aircraft carriers: the Americans and us.”

Fully 60 percent of the €413 billion military budget is reportedly bound up with the modernization of France’s nuclear arsenal: updating warheads and missiles, and Rafale jets and submarines to fire them.

This surge in the military budget is directly related to the war Washington and its European allies are waging against Russia in Ukraine. Since the NATO-Russia war began last year, the NATO powers have injected billions of euros and massive quantities of arms and ammunition into the war, sending tanks and fighter jets to back Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky’s right-wing regime.

France has so far supplied Caesar truck-mounted howitzers and thousands of shells, dozens of MILAN anti-tank missiles, AMX-10 RC light tanks, multiple-launch rocket systems, and air defense equipment to the Ukrainian military to fight Russia. Last November, Macron announced the creation of a “special fund of €100 million” for Kyiv to “buy directly from our manufacturers the equipment it needs most to support its war effort.”

The French Defense Ministry argues that this massive

increase in the military budget is justified by “the very rapid degradation of the geopolitical context,” around the war in Ukraine.

The French military budget must be taken as a warning to workers in struggle against Macron in France and similar reactionary capitalist governments around the world. The NATO-Russia conflict threatens to escalate into full-scale nuclear third world war, threatening the survival of humanity. The French ruling class, like its counterparts, is responding to deepening economic and political crises by pursuing its imperialist ambitions through military means.

In his introductory remarks presenting the LPM, Lecornu said that raising military spending should allow France “to face the new threats facing it and to maintain its place among the leading powers in the world.”

The Defense Ministry declared, “The passage to a war economy must allow us to prepare our military machine for future conflicts and to hold in the long term. The LPM will allow us to modernize and adapt our system of requisitioning in times of peace and war. The bill also allows the possibility of constituting strategic stocks or raw materials or components of strategic interest to benefit the army. The LPM will also establish that the delivery of goods and services will go in priority to the military.”

The looting of the working class to divert massive resources into the armed forces and preparations for catastrophic wars is taking place not only in France, but across all of Europe.

Early this year, Poland announced that it would spend 4 percent of its GDP on defense, including massive purchases of fighter jets and tanks from the United States and South Korea, and drones from Turkey. Germany announced a €100 billion increase in its military budget for 2022 to modernize its armed forces. The Baltic States, Italy, the United Kingdom and Sweden have also announced major increases in their defense spending.

The mobilization of the working class against the ruling elite’s insane war policy, like mobilizing the working class against pension cuts, can only take place through the construction of a mass, rank-and-file movement independent of the union bureaucracies and their pseudo-left allies. These forces, which are giving no perspective to the struggle against Macron's pension

cuts, are even more aligned with French imperialist wars.

The General Confederation of Labor (CGT) bureaucracy has endorsed the US-NATO war against Russia in Ukraine, calling for a pro-NATO regime change in Russia. As for Mélenchon, he has accused Putin of bearing “the entire responsibility” for the war, covering up NATO’s longstanding political and military intervention in Ukraine to build up its forces directly on Russia’s borders.

Mass anger against Macron is continuing to mount, with two-thirds of the French people in favor of a general strike to block the economy to oppose Macron. His preparations of a massive military build-up constitute a further warning on the ultra-reactionary course set by his government. The only way forward is to develop a rank-and-file political mobilization of the working class to bring Macron down in a general strike, and develop a mass, anti-war movement in the French and international working class.



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