

Spain's acting PSOE-Podemos/Sumar government carries out huge military spending increases

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The coalition government of the Socialist Party and Podemos, now integrated in Sumar, is continuing to shower billions of euros on the Spanish military and the US-NATO war against Russia in Ukraine.

That a temporary, acting government, seeking the formation of a viable coalition after last month's inconclusive elections, is making war preparations is a warning. Whatever government is formed, whether led by the right-wing Popular Party (PP) or the PSOE with Sumar, imperialist war abroad and the war on workers at home will continue.

In last month's conference of the Ukraine Defense Contact Group, known as the Ramstein format, acting Defense Minister Margarita Robles confirmed that Spain was sending four additional Leopard tanks, 10 armoured transports, 10 trucks, three civilian ambulances, an armoured ambulance and a field hospital.

She announced the shipment of new batches of light weapons and large-caliber heavy ammunition and confirmed that 1,900 Ukrainian soldiers have already been trained in Spanish territory.

Spain is also part of NATO's advanced plans to deploy tens of thousands of NATO troops near the Russian border. At the NATO summit in Vilnius, Lithuania, acting Prime Minister Pedro Sánchez (PSOE) promised to send 800 soldiers to Slovakia for the first time, while the number of troops in Romania will be increased by 250. There are currently 1,150 troops deployed in Romania, Poland and the Baltics. Eight F-16 jet fighters are also stationed in Romania.

This increase will more than double the presence of Spanish troops in Eastern Europe. Since 2017, Spain has contributed 650 troops—equipped with Leopard 2E

and Pizarro battle tanks, among other material—to the NATO combat group in Latvia, led by Canada. In addition, the Air Force has deployed an air surveillance radar in the vicinity of the Romanian city of Constanza operated by some 40 soldiers; and the Army two Nasams anti-aircraft missile batteries in Amari (Estonia) and Lielvarde (Latvia), with about 100 soldiers each.

As Ukrainian conscripts are again thrust into well-defended front lines—dying by the thousands in minefields and trenches following a bloody debacle in the first phase of the offensive—Madrid has promised a batch of 500 tourniquets for Ukrainian doctors to treat those injured and maimed by Russian mines, artillery, and aviation. The message of PSOE and Podemos/Sumar is clear: the butchery of young soldiers must continue. Ukrainians must continue dying for no other purpose than to advance the interests of the imperialist powers.

The acting government's role recalls the darkest traditions of Spanish imperialism's alliance with Nazism against Russia. During World War II, the fascist regime of General Francisco Franco sent the Blue Division of 47,000 soldiers to Russia as a thank you to Hitler for his support in the Spanish Civil War (1936-1939) in crushing the working class. Eighty years after the Blue Division's oath to Hitler in July 1941 and its incorporation into the Wehrmacht as the 250th Division, Spanish tanks, weapons and ammunition are again rolling against Russia.

The Spanish government remains secretive about the actual amount of aid delivered to Ukraine. It officially records only €74 million, according to the 2023-2026 Stability Programme Update presented to the European

Commission in April. But the real figure is much higher.

According to the Kiel Institute for the World Economy, Spanish military aid up to February this year amounted to €320 million. This includes rifles, machine gun cartridges, grenade launchers, Hawk missile launchers, Aspide anti-aircraft missile systems, winter clothes and equipment, fuel, bulletproof helmets, armored personnel carriers, howitzers and light vehicles. Many of these have been sent to the neo-Nazi Azov battalion.

The PSOE-Podemos government has also contributed over €350 million in financial support to the Ukrainian state to continue serving as a proxy for imperialist war against Russia, and €50 million in humanitarian aid. The Institute recognized this was probably a huge underestimate.

Madrid also participates in the joint aid that the European Union gives to Ukraine, which now amounts to €5.4 billion, diverted from the European Fund for Peace. Aware of the need to escalate and prolong the war, EU foreign policy chief Josep Borrell, Sánchez's former foreign affairs minister, has proposed a plan to almost quadruple the military aid to €20 billion at the meeting of EU foreign ministers on July 28.

Borrell said this was to provide the Ukrainian army with arms and ammunition during the period 2024-2027, confirming the imperialist powers' long-term plan to use Ukrainian lives to weaken and ultimately carve up and dismantle Russia, as preparation for conflict with China. These actions threaten a direct war with Russia and even the use of nuclear weapons.

As the PSOE-Podemos government fuels war abroad, it has implemented brutal attacks on the working class. Its pension cuts have raised the retirement age to 67, it has imposed below-inflation wage increases on broad layers of workers and passed a labour law reform slashing legal protections in the workplace, all while provided billions of euros in bailouts for major banks and corporations.

This was accompanied by a huge military budget hike. Although the government recognises €12 billion in military spending, this is only the funding assigned directly to the Ministry of Defence. Total military spending accounts for €27 billion according to Delás Center for Peace Studies, as it is spread across other

ministries. This sum exceeds the 2 percent GDP that NATO requires its members to spend on their militaries.

Over €7.7 billion is allocated for the purchase and development of weapons, growing by 69 percent since 2022. In this way, 30 percent of total investment budgeted by the government is in weapons. But that is only what is budgeted. The figure for military spending is actually much higher.

Just this year, additional military spending worth €8.7 billion has been approved in a modification of the main budget. This spending was approved across 13 of the 17 council of ministers meetings held this year until April 25, showing that in most meetings of the highest decision-making body of the Spanish government, there is an agenda item to increase military spending. A large part will go to the purchase of weapons such armored and combat vehicles, helicopters, planes, drones and warships.

The global upsurge of the class struggle provides the only basis for opposing escalating militarism. Across Europe, millions of workers in France, Germany, Britain, Italy and Portugal, and tens of thousands of Spanish workers, are participating in strikes and protests against inflation, the deterioration of working conditions, the degradation of public services such as health and education, and the unstoppable rise in rents and mortgages. It is this social force that can put an end to the ruling class's war plans abroad and the social counterrevolution at home.



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