

# SIPRI report: Germany's military spending at 4th place worldwide in 2024

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30 April 2025

Eighty years after the unconditional surrender of Hitler's Wehrmacht, Germany is once again emerging as a major military power. Even before the new government's gigantic rearmament plans were passed, Germany spent more money on armaments in 2024 than ever before, and now ranks fourth among all countries in the world. This is according to a report published on Monday by the Stockholm-based research institute SIPRI.

Not a day goes by without politicians and the media lamenting that the German army (Bundeswehr) is in a desolate state and incapable of defending the country. In fact, only the nuclear powers—the United States (\$997 billion), China (\$314 billion) and Russia (\$149 billion)—spend more on armaments than Germany (\$88.5 billion). Within a year, Germany has risen from seventh to fourth place in global arms spending, overtaking France (\$64.7 billion) and the United Kingdom (\$81.8 billion) for the first time since German reunification.

Germany has thus increased its arms spending by 28 percent compared to 2023—three times the global average rise of 9.4 percent. According to SIPRI, the increase over the last 10 years is as high as 89 percent. A significant portion of the increase in spending, \$7.7 billion, is for financing the war in Ukraine, through which the German government aims to subjugate Russia militarily.

The other arms projects launched in 2024 and included in the budget also demonstrate the aggressive nature of German rearmament. In December last year alone, the Bundestag approved 37 arms projects with a total value of over €20 billion. These include new submarines, the PULS multiple rocket launcher and modernisation of the Taurus medium-range missile, the Puma armoured personnel carrier and the Eurofighter.

The procurement of two new frigates was already decided last summer.

The bare figures make it clear that this is not about defending against an imaginary Russian attack. According to SIPRI, Western and Central European countries spend a total of \$472 billion on their military. Russia, by contrast, spends only \$149 billion—i.e., less than a third. NATO as a whole accounts for 55 percent of all global military spending, Russia only a 10th of that sum.

All these figures refer to 2024 and do not yet take into account the horrendous rearmament package that the new coalition government rushed through the Bundestag on March 18. It provides for €500 billion in loans to make public infrastructure fit for war and completely exempts military spending from the debt brake restricting new financing.

According to government plans, a further €500 billion in war loans is to be taken out. Even if these were spread over five years—which has not yet been decided—German arms spending alone would far exceed that of Russia and move towards \$200 billion. Germany would then be by far the largest military power in Europe and the third largest in the world.

Defence Minister Boris Pistorius (Social Democratic Party, SPD) already declared shortly after taking office in January 2023 that Germany's “goal” must be “to have the strongest and best-equipped army in the EU.” A little later, he stated that Germany must be capable of winning a war against Russia within three to five years.

Christian Mölling, long-time head of the Centre for Security and Defence Policy at the DGAP in Berlin, specified on Monday in *Der Spiegel* magazine that Germany had “at most until 2029” to put these plans into action and called for “rapid and massive growth.”

Eighty years after the start of the Nazis' war of

annihilation against the Soviet Union, which cost the lives of at least 27 million Soviet citizens, the German ruling class is once again planning war against Russia.

They are following a well-worn historical pattern aimed at dominating Eastern Europe, plundering Ukraine and subjugating Russia in order to incorporate its raw materials and sales markets. The growing trade conflicts with the United States are intensifying this trend.

This arms madness, however, goes even further. The German government seeks to achieve strategic independence from the United States and dominate the whole of Europe militarily and economically.

The co-editor of the conservative *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, Berthold Kohler, said this quite openly in an editorial on the day the SIPRI report was published. “Fortress Europe needs German soldiers to protect it from Moscow’s drive for conquest, just as it did 70 years ago [when Germany joined NATO],” Kohler explained. But that alone is not enough in view of America’s departure. Germany must “also develop the will to lead in security policy.”

This “leadership will” extends across the entire globe. In the coalition agreement setting out the program for the new German government, the Christian Democratic Union (CDU) and Social Democratic Party (SPD) announce they will pay greater attention to “strategic interests in the Middle East,” counter “Russian and Chinese influence in Africa,” and expand “strategic partnerships with the states of Latin America and the Caribbean.” Furthermore, a “stable, free and secure Indo-Pacific region is of fundamental interest.” China will be “confronted with self-confidence and strength,” according to the coalition parties.

This insane programme of rearmament and war can be financed only by massive attacks on broad sections of the population. The war credits that have already been approved mean additional annual burdens of several dozen billion euros. The cuts to citizens’ income, paid to the poor, and the public sector layoffs announced in the coalition agreement are only the beginning. Wage cuts and mass layoffs are just as much on the agenda as are cuts in education, pensions and healthcare. Added to this are job cuts in industry to adapt it for war and trade wars.

This arms race is supported by all parties in the Bundestag. Even the trillion-euro programme of the

government does not go far enough for the Greens and the far-right Alternative for Germany (AfD). While the AfD is calling for a regular war budget of 5 percent of GDP (currently around £225 billion), the Greens have made their approval conditional on a further increase in armament. Even the Left Party, which likes to portray itself as an opponent of militarism, approved the arms package in the Bundesrat, though its votes were not even needed.

Behind this united front for war and cuts is the deep crisis of capitalism. Like Trump in the United States, the ruling class in Germany is responding with dictatorship at home and war abroad. The appointment of right-wing hardliners and representatives of the economic oligarchy to ministerial posts is eloquent testimony.

The only way to stop this madness is through the international mobilisation of the working class against capitalism, that is, the mobilisation of all those who create all social wealth and bear the entire burden of war and crisis. The International Committee of the Fourth International (ICFI) will present this socialist perspective on May 3 at 9 p.m. (German time) at the International May Day Online Rally. The call for the rally states:

This year’s May Day rally will present a socialist programme to unite workers internationally in the fight against capitalism. It will outline a revolutionary perspective for ending imperialist violence and building a society based on equality and human needs.



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