

Germany pledges additional military aid for Ukraine and spearheads European rearmament drive

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Germany is participating in the new NATO military aid package for Ukraine and will contribute \$500 million, as announced by the Ministry of Defence and the Federal Foreign Office in Berlin. NATO Secretary General Mark Rutte praised the decision, declaring that the supplies would help Ukraine to continue to “defend” itself against the “Russian aggressor.”

Last month, US President Donald Trump made clear that while Washington was prepared to continue supplying weapons, the costs must be borne by the European allies. At the beginning of August, the Netherlands became the first NATO member to pledge funds for the newly created war chest.

The military package underscores that the European powers—and Germany above all—are determined to continue the NATO war against Russia even as US support becomes increasingly conditional. European politicians have also sharply criticised today’s planned meeting in Alaska between Trump and Russian President Vladimir Putin, insisting that the hardline stance toward Moscow must be maintained.

The claim that arms deliveries to Kiev are purely “defensive” is war propaganda. Russia’s reactionary invasion of Ukraine does not alter the fact that the imperialist powers systematically provoked this conflict over decades. Since the dissolution of the Soviet Union in 1991, NATO has relentlessly expanded eastward in violation of pledges made to Moscow, encircling Russia militarily and stoking confrontation.

Now, with the Ukrainian military suffering severe setbacks and transatlantic tensions mounting, the EU powers are moving toward the full militarisation of society and the establishment of a war economy—at the expense of the democratic and social rights of the working class. This is confirmed by a recent *Financial Times* investigation: “Europe builds for war as arms factories expand at triple speed,” which provides a snapshot of how aggressively the European arms industry—led by German imperialism—is expanding.

The FT analysed radar satellite data from 150 facilities across 37 companies in Europe. The results are stark: arms production facilities are expanding at three times the rate of peacetime, covering more than 7 million square metres of new industrial development. This construction boom is the material

embodiment of the “defence revival” long threatened by European governments—made possible through massive state subsidies and attacks on the working class and aimed at shifting from just-in-time peacetime output to sustained wartime production.

One-third of the sites surveyed showed visible expansion or new construction. The growth is concentrated in ammunition and missile production—two bottlenecks in NATO’s support for Ukraine. Areas showing physical change jumped from 790,000 square metres in 2020–21 to 2.8 million in 2024–25. The expansions include new factories, explosives plants, roads and support infrastructure.

Among the largest is a joint Rheinmetall–N7 Holding complex in Várpalota, Hungary, producing ammunition for the Lynx infantry fighting vehicle, the Leopard 2 tank, and potentially the Panther. The facility will also house an explosives factory. By 2027, Rheinmetall plans to raise its annual production of 155mm artillery shells from 70,000 in 2022 to 1.1 million—accounting for much of Europe’s projected rise in total capacity from 300,000 rounds before the war to 2 million this year.

The EU’s “Act in Support of Ammunition Production” (ASAP) programme—worth €500 million—has funded 88 sites to overcome these bottlenecks. Twenty have undergone major expansions, while 14 have added smaller facilities such as car parks or loading bays.

ASAP-backed projects include MBDA’s missile plant in Schrobenhausen, Germany, which is expanding production of Enforcer shoulder-launched missiles and preparing to produce up to 1,000 US Patriot GEM-T surface-to-air missiles under a \$5.6 billion NATO contract. Norwegian manufacturer Kongsberg opened a new missile factory in June 2024, while the UK’s BAE Systems is building an explosive-filling facility at its Glascoed, South Wales site to multiply 155mm shell output sixteen-fold.

The EU is already negotiating a follow-up programme worth €1.5 billion to replicate ASAP for missiles, air defence, drones and artillery. Industry figures openly praise these subsidies as “instrumental” to their growth. Nammo, which received €55

million, is expanding shell and propellant production in Finland, and warns that air defence missiles and high explosives are still produced “only in very small quantities.”

This industrial mobilisation is not a temporary surge but a deep, structural transformation. As former NATO arms control director William Alberque noted, “Once you’re mass-producing shells, the metals and explosives start flowing, which drops the cost and complexity of missile production.” The shift is toward a permanent war economy.

As in the 1930s, the militarisation drive extends far beyond the arms sector. Civilian industries are being integrated into weapons production:

- **Automotive:** Volkswagen, faced with overcapacity and falling exports, is exploring partnerships with Rheinmetall to produce military technology. Continental and Bosch have transferred staff and facilities to Rheinmetall and Hensoldt.

- **Factory conversions:** Rheinmetall has repurposed civilian plants in Berlin and Neuss for military components. KNDS Germany has taken over a former Alstom rail plant in Görlitz to produce Leopard 2 tanks and Puma infantry fighting vehicles.

- **Mechanical engineering & steel:** Renk Group plans to exit its civilian industrial business entirely to focus on defence. Thyssenkrupp Marine Systems is ramping up submarine production. German steel producers are shifting into armoured steel and similar products.

This is an unmistakable repetition of the economic transformation that accompanied the rise of German imperialism in the 1930s, when the same conglomerates enriched themselves by arming Hitler’s Wehrmacht.

In his government statement before the last NATO summit, which agreed to raise defence spending from 2 to 5 percent of GDP, Chancellor Friedrich Merz insisted that Germany’s militarisation was not at Trump’s behest but based on its “own convictions.” Germany, he declared, would “make the Bundeswehr the strongest conventional army in Europe,” as befitted its “size, economic power, and geographical location.”

The spending target will increase the military budget from today’s €85 billion to €225 billion by 2029. A constitutional amendment passed by the ruling parties exempts all defence spending above 1 percent of GDP from the “debt brake,” which means that military spending can rise without limit. In March, both houses of the German parliament passed legislation enabling the German government to take out more than 1 trillion euros in new loans for the military build-up. Combined with the €100 billion “special fund” of 2022 this constitutes a rearmament programme comparable only to the Nazi era.

Procurement plans already under way include:

- 20 Eurofighter jets (€4–5 billion)
- Up to 3,000 Boxer armoured vehicles (€10 billion)
- Up to 3,500 Patria infantry fighting vehicles (€7 billion)
- 1,000 additional Leopard tanks over 10 years (currently 320 in service)
- 1,400 logistics vehicles from Rheinmetall (€770 million)

- 6,500 lorries (€3.5 billion)
- 35 nuclear-capable F-35 fighter jets (€10 billion)
- 60 Chinook transport helicopters (€7 billion)
- Israeli Arrow 3 missile defence system (€4 billion)

Rheinmetall alone has won €12 billion in Bundeswehr contracts for digitalisation since 2024 and expects €300 billion in orders across Europe by 2030. Thyssenkrupp Marine Systems is receiving more orders for submarines, frigates and mine countermeasures.

The German government’s insane march toward war is effectively backed by all capitalist parties. The demand to spend 5 percent of GDP on defence originated with the far-right AfD, but it is now embraced across the political spectrum. The Greens—once nominally pacifist—are among the most fervent militarists. The Left Party postures as a critic while voting for key war credits, including the €1 trillion package in the Bundesrat, and facilitating Merz’s election as chancellor.

This consensus mirrors the bourgeois unity before World War I and in the 1930s, when the ruling elite and its parties rallied first around the militarist and dictatorial agenda of Kaiser Wilhelm II and later Hitler and the Nazis to pursue a policy of imperial conquest and to brutally crush working class opposition at home.

As then the consequences of the militarist offensive will be catastrophic. The build-up of Europe’s war machine is inseparable from an assault on wages, working conditions and democratic rights. As in the run-up to the two world wars, the ruling classes are responding to deep internal crises—social inequality, political instability, inter-imperialist rivalry—by preparing for war abroad, repression at home and the re-introduction of the draft to secure the necessary cannon fodder for its criminal imperialist wars of plunder. The genocide of the Palestinians in Gaza shows that they are once again prepared to slaughter hundreds of thousands and commit any crime.

The working class must confront this reality and prepare its own political counteroffensive. Stopping the drive toward world war requires the abolition of NATO, the dismantling of the imperialist war machine, and the placing of the economy’s vast resources under the democratic control of the working class. This is the programme of the International Committee of the Fourth International (ICFI) and its Socialist Equality Parties worldwide, which must be built as the new revolutionary leadership of the international working class.



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