

French President Macron announces expansion of nuclear weapons arsenal

Peter Schwarz
4 March 2026

Two days after the US attack on Iran, French President Emmanuel Macron announced a massive expansion of France's nuclear arsenal. If further proof were needed that the war in the Middle East is not about fighting terrorism and containing nuclear weapons but rather a step toward World War III, Macron has supplied it.

Disarmament, nuclear non-proliferation treaties, international law and other mechanisms with which the imperialist powers have sought to contain the danger of mutual nuclear annihilation are now things of the past. In the struggle for raw materials, profits and world power, they are filling their arsenals and upgrading their nuclear weapons. The war in the Middle East is serving as a catalyst for this.

The mottos that U.S. Secretary of War Pete Hegseth issued on Monday for the destruction of Iran—everything on our terms, no rules of engagement, no democracy building, no politically correct wars, we fight to win—are also the mottos of the European imperialist powers.

Anyone who wants to defend their freedom must be feared, Macron declared. That is why France's nuclear arsenal must be enlarged and anchored deep within the European continent. He recalled that the explosive power of a single French nuclear submarine already equals the total of all the bombs dropped on Europe during World War II.

Only a fool who has learned nothing from history can believe that France and the other imperialist powers would not use this enormous destructive potential.

Macron announced his plans in a keynote speech at the French naval base Ile Longue against the militarist backdrop of a nuclear submarine. He said France would build an “advanced deterrent” for the European continent. In the future, it would also station airborne

nuclear forces in interested neighboring countries, particularly Germany. Belgium, the Netherlands, Sweden, Poland, Denmark and Greece have also expressed interest.

The first concrete steps will be taken this year, including joint nuclear military exercises with Germany, he stated. “Germany is a key partner,” Macron said. The two countries also intend to work closely together in the areas of early warning, air defense, and “deep precision strike.” As it has already done with the United Kingdom, France has now also set up a nuclear steering group with Germany with the aim of “strengthening European security as a whole.”

He promised that France's nuclear arsenal, estimated at 300 nuclear warheads, would be further expanded. The exact extent of this expansion is to remain secret. He stated that the number of warheads would no longer be disclosed in the future.

Macron took great pains not to offend US President Trump. He emphasized that France's nuclear arsenal complements NATO's American security guarantees and is not a substitute for them. The offer to other European countries was made “in full transparency” with Washington. He praised the role of the US in ensuring Europe's security and thanked them for it.

However, he also made it clear that France is seeking to free itself from military and nuclear dependence on the US. Macron said that the new US security strategy shows that Europe must take greater responsibility for its own security.

European plans for an independent army and nuclear weapons date back to the 1950s but have repeatedly failed due to internal European differences. Macron intensified these efforts during Trump's first presidency. In 2020, he offered interested European countries a “strategic dialogue” on France's nuclear

arsenal in order to define Europe's "vital interests" but met with little enthusiasm from Christian Democrat Chancellor Angela Merkel and later from her Social Democrat successor Olaf Scholz.

Under the Christian Democrat Friedrich Merz, Germany's stance changed. Trump's punitive tariffs against the European Union, his threat to annex Greenland and his attempt to reach an agreement with Russia over the heads of the Europeans brought Paris and Berlin closer together.

The war against Iran has accelerated this development. Unlike in the wars in Afghanistan, Iraq and Libya, this time the US is not relying on NATO or a "coalition of the willing" but is waging war alone, together only with Israel.

The European powers fear being excluded from the resource-rich and strategically important region. That is why they have thrown their weight behind the illegal war of aggression and its imperialist goals. For years, they have used Russia's violation of international law and the "rules-based order" to justify their support for the war in Ukraine. But these concerns have now evaporated in the face of the criminal actions of the US and Israel.

The US can operate unhindered from its bases in Germany, and the UK has now also made military bases available to the US and sent its own armed forces to the region. Chancellor Merz visited Trump at the White House on Tuesday as the first European head of government since the start of the war and demonstratively showed his unconditional support. NATO Secretary General Mark Rutte has also given his full backing to the war.

Nevertheless, the European powers are watching developments in the Middle East with fear and unease. They fear the consequences of a long-term destabilization in the region, which would hit Europe in particular in the form of exploding energy prices, economic turmoil and new waves of refugees, further exacerbating existing social tensions.

And they fear that US support for Ukraine will dry up completely, thereby strengthening Russia. The US has largely stopped financing the war in Ukraine since Trump's return to the White House and now only supplies weapons if Europe pays for them. But given the high consumption of weapons and ammunition in the war against Iran, this may soon no longer be the

case.

While the US is preparing for war against its economic rival China and has attacked two of its most important oil suppliers, Venezuela and Iran, the subjugation of Russia is a priority for European and especially German imperialism. The increase in military spending to 5 percent of GDP, to which NATO members have committed themselves, serves this goal. So does the establishment of European nuclear weapons.

However, European efforts to "learn to speak the language of power politics" (Merz) again are also exacerbating national and social tensions within Europe. While Paris, Berlin, Rome and Warsaw agree on the goal, none of them wants to cede supremacy to the others.

Paris insists that the decision to use nuclear weapons remains the sole prerogative of the French president, as stipulated in the French constitution. Berlin, on the other hand, is not prepared to accept "nuclear sharing" in which only Paris has its finger on the trigger. The 2017 agreement on a Future Combat Air System (FCAS), which is central to a joint arsenal of nuclear weapons, is on the verge of collapse due to irreconcilable Franco-German differences.

The costs of war and rearmament are already being passed on to the working class through brutal social spending cuts and mass layoffs. This will be further exacerbated by the war with Iran. Herein lies the answer to the danger of a third world war and nuclear annihilation. It can only be stopped by an independent movement of the international working class that combines resistance to social spending cuts, layoffs and war with the fight against their cause, capitalism, and the building of a socialist society.



To contact the WSW and the Socialist Equality Party visit:

[wsws.org/contact](https://www.wsws.org/contact)