

Global military spending surges to record \$2.887 trillion

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27 April 2026

Global military spending hit a record \$2.887 trillion in 2025—the highest level ever recorded and the 11th consecutive year of growth, the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI) reported Monday.

The surge in military spending comes as the Trump administration is waging war all over the world, from Venezuela to Iran, and as the European imperialist powers and Japan are carrying out a massive rearmament drive coupled with a systematic attack on social spending.

The United States, with \$954 billion in 2025 military spending, remained the largest military spender on earth, accounting for one-third of global military expenditure.

“Spending approved by the U.S. Congress for 2026 has risen to over \$1 trillion, a substantial increase from 2025, and could rise further to \$1.5 trillion in 2027 if President Trump’s latest budget proposal is accepted,” said Nan Tian, the program director of SIPRI’s military expenditure work.

The Trump administration submitted that proposal on April 2, with the Pentagon releasing the detailed breakdown on April 21: a \$1.5 trillion defense budget for fiscal 2027, the largest single-year defense request in US history and a 42 percent increase over the previous year. Defense Secretary Pete Hegseth said the request would “expand American military dominance for decades to come” and would build what US President Donald Trump has called the “Dream Military.”

The package allocates \$17.5 billion for the “Golden Dome” missile defense program, \$65.8 billion for shipbuilding, \$71.2 billion for the Space Force and approximately \$74 billion for drones and counter-drone systems.

It follows the US bombing campaign against Venezuela and the kidnapping of Venezuelan President Nicolás Maduro in January, the war against Iran—now under a fragile ceasefire while the Strait of Hormuz remains under US blockade—and the continuing arming of Israel’s genocide in Gaza.

The administration’s 2025 National Security Strategy, released in December, declares that “detering a conflict

over Taiwan, ideally by preserving military overmatch, is a priority” and pledges to “restore American preeminence in the Western Hemisphere” while denying “non-Hemispheric competitors the ability to position forces or other threatening capabilities” in the region.

In December, Trump signed a National Defense Authorization Act provision establishing the automatic registration of all men in the United States aged 18 to 26 for the Selective Service System, the precondition for a future military draft. Automatic registration takes effect in December 2026.

The Democratic leadership in Congress has supported every National Defense Authorization Act of the past decade and has signaled it will not block the Trump administration’s \$1.5 trillion request.

The European imperialist powers combined nearly matched the US, as spending rose 14 percent to \$864 billion amid a vast rearmament drive. SIPRI called it the sharpest annual rise in arms spending in Central and Western Europe since the end of the Cold War. Asia and Oceania recorded an 8.1 percent rise to \$681 billion, the largest annual increase in the region since 2009.

“Global military spending rose again in 2025 as states responded to another year of wars, uncertainty and geopolitical upheaval with large-scale armament drives,” said Xiao Liang, a researcher in SIPRI’s Military Expenditure and Arms Production Programme. “Given the range of current crises, as well as many states’ long-term military spending targets, this growth will probably continue through 2026 and beyond.”

Europe’s 29 NATO members spent a combined \$559 billion in 2025. Twenty-three of NATO’s 32 members met or exceeded the alliance’s 2 percent-of-GDP threshold. In June 2025 the alliance agreed to raise that target to 5 percent of GDP by 2035. Belgium’s military spending rose 59 percent in a single year, Spain’s 50 percent, Norway’s 49 percent, Denmark’s 46 percent, Poland’s 23 percent and Canada’s 23 percent.

“In 2025 military spending by European NATO members

rose faster than at any time since 1953,” said Jade Guiberteau Ricard, a SIPRI research assistant.

Germany was the largest European military spender, raising its budget 24 percent to \$114 billion—the third consecutive year of double-digit increases and now the world’s fourth-largest military budget. The German military budget rose to 2.3 percent of GDP, the first time it has crossed the 2 percent threshold since 1990. Berlin has pledged to reach 3.5 percent by 2029, exempting all military spending above 1 percent of GDP from its constitutional debt brake.

On April 22, German Defense Minister Boris Pistorius and the Inspector General of the Bundeswehr, Carsten Breuer, presented the first comprehensive Bundeswehr military strategy in the history of the German postwar state. The document declares the aim of building “the strongest conventional army in Europe,” expanding the Bundeswehr to 460,000 active troops and reservists, deploying a permanent combat brigade in Lithuania, reorganizing “state, economy and society” for “total defence” and preparing for the reintroduction of conscription.

Speaking to industrialists at the Hanover Trade Fair on Monday, Pistorius said “a strong industrial sector is an essential prerequisite for the defence of democracy and security.” It is the largest German rearmament program since the Second World War.

Ukraine spent \$84.1 billion on its military in 2025—40 percent of its GDP and 63 percent of all government expenditure, the highest proportion in the world for the fourth consecutive year. Russia spent \$190 billion, equal to 7.5 percent of its GDP.

“In 2025 military expenditure as a share of government spending reached the highest level ever recorded in both Russia and Ukraine,” said Lorenzo Scarazzato, a SIPRI researcher. “Their spending is likely to keep growing in 2026 if the war continues.”

China spent an estimated \$336 billion. Japan’s spending jumped 9.7 percent to \$62.2 billion, reaching 1.4 percent of GDP—the highest share since 1958. Taiwan’s military spending rose 14 percent to \$18.2 billion, its largest annual increase since at least 1988, after Trump demanded the island raise its spending to 10 percent of GDP.

“US allies in Asia and Oceania such as Australia, Japan and the Philippines are spending more on their militaries, not only due to long-standing regional tensions but also due to growing uncertainty over US support,” said Diego Lopes da Silva, a senior SIPRI researcher.

On April 21, the far-right government of Japanese Prime Minister Sanae Takaichi lifted Japan’s ban on the export of lethal weapons, one of the sharpest departures from the postwar constitutional framework established under US

occupation, which supposedly blocks the revival of Japanese militarism. Mitsubishi Heavy Industries, Kawasaki Heavy Industries and other Japanese arms firms will now be permitted to sell weapons to 17 countries.

Takaichi has accelerated Japan’s pledge to raise military spending to 2 percent of GDP, ordered a wholesale revision of the country’s national security and defense strategies and is pursuing constitutional amendments that would gut Article 9, the so-called pacifist clause. The Japanese military has begun stationing long-range strike missiles within firing range of mainland China across the Ryukyu Islands chain, and is positioning surface-to-air missile units on Yonaguni, only 110 kilometers from Taiwan.

In a November 2025 statement to the Japanese parliament, Takaichi said a Chinese naval blockade of Taiwan “could undoubtedly constitute a case of a survival-threatening situation”—the legal trigger that authorizes the deployment of Japan’s Self-Defense Forces. Beijing’s foreign ministry, in a statement this month, accused Tokyo of moving toward “new militarism.”

Worldwide, governments are slashing social spending to fund rearmament. SIPRI researchers warned that the diversion of national resources will mean cuts to social services, healthcare and development assistance. Trump’s \$1.5 trillion Pentagon request would be paid for in part by a 10 percent cut to non-defense discretionary spending—healthcare, scientific research, housing and education.

At a private White House Easter luncheon on April 1, Trump put the trade-off in plain terms. He told Office of Management and Budget Director Russell Vought, in his retelling, “Don’t send any money for daycare, because the United States can’t take care of daycare.” He explained: “We’re fighting wars.”



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