

Defence & Security

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EU Defence Integration

PESCO / European Defence Fund / EDIRPA

- **PESCO (Permanent Structured Cooperation):** 68 projects running, covering military training, cyber, maritime security, and medical support. Member states committed to increasing defence budgets, but compliance remains uneven.
- **European Defence Fund (EDF):** €8 billion for 2021-2027 — funding joint R&D for defence capabilities. Next MFF expected to substantially increase this.
- **EDIRPA (European Defence Industry Reinforcement through Common Procurement Act):** Operational since 2023 — incentivises joint procurement, addresses the fragmentation of European defence procurement.
- **EU military mobility:** Von der Leyen headed to Lithuania for "drone crisis talks" (May 2026), emphasising the military mobility/airspace security nexus.

Strategic Compass

- The EU's Strategic Compass (adopted March 2022) continues implementation
 - Pushes the bloc to define itself as a credible security actor independent of the US
 - Rapid Deployment Capacity (up to 5,000 troops) not yet fully operational — member states have been slow to commit forces
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EU-NATO Cooperation

Trump/Iran War Context

The US-Iran war (Feb 2026) has fundamentally reshaped the transatlantic dynamic:

- **"Europe races to make it harder for Trump to rattle NATO"** (Politico) — European leaders actively building structures that limit US leverage over NATO
- Trump's chaotic decision-making on troop deployments — first refusing to commit troops to Poland, then U-turning to pledge an additional 5,000 troops
- US cut troop levels in Germany by 5,000 amid Trump's personal spat with Merz
- Rubio tried to reassure allies but acknowledged Trump's "disappointment" with NATO would be discussed at the Ankara summit

Joint Declaration

- The 2023 and 2024 EU-NATO Joint Declarations remain the framework for cooperation
 - Focus areas: military mobility, cyber defence, hybrid threats, resilience of critical infrastructure
 - The Trump/Iran war has accelerated cooperation — EU sees NATO as vulnerable to US domestic politics
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Ukraine War (May 2026)

Current Situation (Day 1,552)

- Russia launched an Oreshnik hypersonic ballistic missile strike on Kyiv on 24 May 2026 — described as a "deranged attack" and "reckless nuclear brinkmanship"
- Russia threatens more Kyiv strikes and told foreign nationals to leave
- A Luhansk strike sparked Russian accusations and vows to retaliate
- Russia testing NATO's eastern flank via drone incursions into Polish/Romanian airspace
- Frontlines have shifted little in 2025-26 — a war of attrition dominated by drone warfare, artillery duels, and missile strikes on infrastructure

EU Military Aid

- **European Peace Facility (EPF):** Topped up multiple times. Total has exceeded €12 billion in military support for Ukraine
- **Ammunition plan:** The "one million shells" initiative fell short — only ~500,000 delivered by early 2025. EU is now pursuing longer-term production contracts
- **Training mission (EUMAM Ukraine):** Has trained over 60,000 Ukrainian soldiers
- Lithuania calling for frozen Russian assets to be used for Ukraine funding

Ukraine's NATO Membership

- Sweden publicly backed Ukraine's path to NATO
- Rutte confirmed Zelenskyy would attend the NATO summit in Ankara
- The Ankara summit is seen as a pivotal moment for Ukraine's membership pathway
- No consensus yet — US, Germany, and Hungary (pre-Orbán) reluctant; UK, Poland, Baltic states pushing hard

European Troop Deployments

- Discussions ongoing about European troop deployments for post-war security guarantees
 - UK troops already deployed in Estonia as part of NATO's enhanced Forward Presence
 - France has floated the idea of a "European military mission" to Ukraine
 - No formal decision taken — highly sensitive given risk of direct escalation with Russia
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National Defence Spending

Across Europe, defence spending has surged:

- **NATO target of 2% GDP** is now met by 23 of 32 members (up from 8 in 2022)
 - Several countries pushing toward 2.5% or 3% (Poland on track for 4%)
 - **Germany:** €100bn special fund for the Bundeswehr has yielded mixed results — bureaucratic inertia despite increased spending. BBC reported US troop withdrawal from Germany seen as "foreseeable"
 - **UK:** Defence spending at 2.3% GDP — Labour committed to maintaining this. UK-EU security pact being negotiated (see EU-UK Relations)
 - **France:** Macron declared Europe's freedom faces its greatest threat since WW2
 - **Poland:** Pushing 4% GDP — Europe's highest proportional spender, massive modernisation programme
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European Defence Industry

Joint Procurement

- EDIRPA driving collaborative procurement (ammunition, air defence, drones)
- European allies rushing to bolster Cyprus defences after drones targeted a British base
- EU trying to reduce dependency on US defence equipment

German Zeitenwende

- The €100bn special fund and policy shift announced by Scholz in Feb 2022
- Results mixed: procurement still slow, bureaucracy slow to adapt
- Germany committing to long-term contracts for ammunition, Eurofighter, naval vessels
- But US troop withdrawal and Merz's difficult coalition have created uncertainty

French Push for Strategic Autonomy

- France continues pushing for European strategic autonomy from the US
 - 2027 presidential race (Philippe favourite) will determine direction
 - Macron has long argued Europe cannot rely on the US for its security
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UK-EU Defence Pact (May 2026)

The flagship deliverable of Starmer's EU reset:

- Labour's David Lammy promised a new UK-EU security pact
 - Covers military mobility, joint procurement, intelligence sharing, and cyber defence
 - Kaja Kallas stated "fishing shouldn't block a defence pact" — indicating the political will to separate defence negotiations from broader TCA disputes
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Sources

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