

RISING TO THE CHALLENGE

Building a global majority against war and nuclear weapons

Across the world, alongside the huge increases in military spending, the threat of nuclear weapons once again being used in war is the highest it has ever been. Nuclear weapons states are modernising and expanding their nuclear weapons. Arms control treaties are collapsing and more countries are considering developing a nuclear arsenal.

Attempts to turn whole countries' economies towards war are being justified by Russia's continued war on Ukraine, and the claim that this devastating conflict will spread across the continent. Rather than preventing war, preparation for it – through initiatives like ReArm Europe Plan 2030 (renamed Readiness 2030) – could drag the entire world into a global war that risks going nuclear.

Now more than ever, movements for peace, economic and climate justice must coordinate actions to offer joined-up solutions to the real security threats. This is vital if we are to halt the war drive and redirect these huge resources into securing the sustainable, peaceful future humanity needs to survive.

UKRAINE WAR - DRIVING MILITARY SPENDING AND NUCLEAR DANGERS

This catastrophic war has been used to justify huge increases in military spending in order to carry out an unprecedented scale of rearmament.

According to the Stockholm International Peace and Research Institute, in 2025 the military expenditure of the 32 NATO members amounted to \$1581 billion in 2025 – 55 per cent of spending globally. Whilst US military spending reduced due to its ending military aid to Ukraine, it still accounted for 33% of the entire global spending at \$954 billion. Across Europe, total military spending rose by 14 per cent to \$864 billion. Russia's spending increased by 5.9 % to an estimated \$190 billion, or 7.5 per cent of its GDP. Germany saw a 24% increase to \$114 billion, with Britain next on \$89 billion. Ukraine was the seventh largest spender behind Britain, increasing by 20% to an estimated \$84.1 billion, or 40 per cent of its GDP.



NUCLEAR SPENDING AT RECORD LEVELS

According to the International Campaign for the Abolition of Nuclear Weapons, global spending on nuclear weapons reached a record \$119 billion in 2025. US increased its spending by 22% to \$69.2 billion, outspending all other nuclear weapons states combined. China was second, spending \$13.5 billion, an increase of 7%. Britain spent \$12.6 billion – a 17% increase on 2024 – overtaking Russia as the third biggest spender. Russia's spending increase by 6% to \$9.5 billion whilst France was the fifth biggest spender at \$7.7bn, up 8%.

The war in Ukraine has also created the most serious nuclear flashpoint in the world today.

Between them, nuclear-armed Russia and NATO possess the vast majority of the world's 12,000 nuclear weapons.

Russia lowered its nuclear-use threshold to include threats to its territory from conventional long-range missiles in 2024. It also placed nuclear weapons outside its territory in Belarus, for the first time since the Cold War. It has since carried out successful test flights of new nuclear delivery systems, including the long-range,

nuclear-powered Burevestnik missile which flew 14,000 kilometres.

In 2025, the US stationed a whole new generation of B61-12 nuclear weapons at NATO bases in Belgium, Germany, Italy, the Netherlands, Turkey to replace 150 B61 nuclear bombs. But the Pentagon also added Britain to the deployment, increasing the number of NATO bases with nuclear weapons for the first time since the Cold War. These new US B61-12 bombs can be launched from US F35A nuclear-capable fighter jets stationed at the six NATO bases.

This nuclear upgrade has taken place alongside further NATO expansion, with Finland joining in 2023 and Sweden joining in 2024. This has doubled the length of member states' borders with Russia.

NATO's 'nuclear sharing' arrangement means that some NATO member states are expected to host US nuclear weapons. In the face of strong public opposition, Finland has now lifted its long-standing ban on having nuclear weapons on its territory in order to 'align' with NATO nuclear policy. NATO's nuclear sharing is in breach of the nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty. It increases the risk of nuclear weapons being used, as well as the risk of nuclear accidents. Far from protecting these countries' populations, NATO nuclear sharing places them in great danger and makes them a target in any conflict involving the US.

Each of these US B61-12 bombs has a potential destructive power three times that of the Hiroshima bomb that killed over 200,000 people. Yet, they are referred to in the defence industry as 'battlefield' nuclear weapons, to try and justify them being used against troops and conventional weapons. Modelling by Princeton University shows that the use of such 'battlefield' weapons would rapidly escalate into a wider nuclear confrontation, leading to casualties of 2.6 million people within a few hours and many more afterwards, through radiation and climate-related impacts.

Whilst the Trump administration has withdrawn its military aid to Ukraine, and is considering reducing some of its military contribution to NATO's rapid response force, it certainly is not withdrawing its nuclear presence. In fact, Trump is in talks with European NATO states about expanding the number of countries hosting the

nuclear-capable F35A fighter jets that can launch its nuclear weapons.

But rather than seek an alternative path to de-escalate the conflict and focus on ways to secure a ceasefire, many European leaders want to site nuclear weapons in even more countries alongside NATO's huge nuclear presence. Far from ending the Ukraine war, or securing a lasting peace, this would only increase the risk of nuclear confrontation between Russia, NATO and Europe. This must be a stark wake-up call to us all.

EUROPEAN 'NUCLEAR-SHARING' INCREASES RISKS OF NUCLEAR CONFRONTATION

France possesses 40 nuclear-capable Rafale fighter jets, four nuclear-armed submarines and currently 290 nuclear warheads. It also plans to build a new nuclear airbase in eastern France. In March, President Macron announced an increase in its nuclear weapons. He also set out plans for a new nuclear doctrine that will enable nine other European countries – Belgium, Germany, Greece, the Netherlands, Denmark, Norway, Sweden and Poland – to participate in French nuclear operations. This includes these countries joining nuclear exercises with the aim of deploying French nuclear jets or nuclear-armed submarines to their military bases. This could increase the

number of countries in Europe hosting nuclear weapons and result in nuclear weapons deployed right on Russia's borders.

Debates about whether **Germany** should develop its own nuclear weapons are continuing, although Prime Minister Merz has said he has ruled it out. Germany already hosts nuclear weapons at the US Büchel Air Base and over 36,000 US troops. In May Trump announced plans to withdraw 5,000 of these troops. A central participant in France's expansionist nuclear doctrine, Germany is also taking a much more aggressive, leading role in European re-armament and has pledged to build Europe's strongest army.

Poland has a 232km border with Russia and has repeatedly made requests to host US nuclear weapons. It currently hosts US troops on a rotational basis, and is seeking to host a permanent US military base, which the Trump administration has said it is considering.

BRITAIN'S WARMONGERING AND NUCLEAR EXPANSIONISM

The British government is expanding its nuclear capability with the purchase of 12 nuclear-capable F35A fighter jets to be deployed as part of NATO's nuclear mission. It is one of six NATO states now hosting US nuclear weapons at RAF



Lakenheath, in Suffolk. It is pushing ahead with a £205 billion replacement of its nuclear-armed submarines as well as another £15 billion on developing a new nuclear warhead. Meanwhile, nuclear spending is set to increase year-on-year to 25% of the Ministry of Defence budget.

It is formally increasing its nuclear cooperation with France and Germany with the Northwood and Kensington Treaties signed last year.

In January, it signed with France a 'Declaration of Intent with Ukraine' to deploy thousands of troops to Ukraine in the event of a ceasefire. In response the Russian government said it would amount to 'direct foreign intervention' and troops would be 'legitimate targets'.

SUSTAINABLE PEACE REQUIRES A NEW DIRECTION

A sustainable peace for Europe, Ukraine and Russia cannot be achieved by deploying troops from NATO countries into Ukraine, backed by the constant, looming threat of nuclear war. On the contrary, this will only prolong and escalate the crisis, and risk drawing NATO states into direct confrontation with Russia.

Reports that European countries are considering restarting dialogue with Russia to end the war are welcome and absolutely vital. Only a diplomatic and political approach can help create a sustainable security that can ensure the long-term peace and prosperity for Europe, Ukraine and Russia.

Central to this must be the withdrawal of all nuclear weapons in the region: getting the US weapons out of Europe and Russian weapons out of Belarus. Instead of pushing for more nuclear weapons, Britain and Europe should be working to secure a European nuclear-weapons free zone and supporting action to abolish all nuclear weapons.

WE NEED COORDINATED ACTION TO MAKE THIS HAPPEN

Opposition to war and nuclear weapons is growing. Protests and strike action are building across Europe. Here in Britain, opposition to Britain's toxic military alliance with the US is strengthening. 70% oppose the war on Iran and

over 60% want US nuclear weapons out of this country.

CND is actively protesting at US NATO bases in Britain – including RAF Lakenheath, Menwith Hill and RAF Fairford – to shut them down, and remove all NATO nuclear weapons and F35A nuclear-capable fighter jets from Britain. We want to strengthen global coordinated action on this.

CND is also working with politicians, trade unions, climate and social justice organisations to promote the Alternative Defence Review, which calls for a significantly demilitarised defence strategy rooted in human security and common security – prioritising diplomacy, global cooperation, conflict prevention, and investment in health, education, climate resilience, social care.

enquiries@cnduk.org
020 7700 2393
www.cnduk.org
Instagram: @cnd_uk

