



# EUROPEAN DEFENSE HEAVYWEIGHTS SAY MEETING TRUMP'S MILITARY SPENDING TARGET WON'T BE EASY - ASSOCIATED PRESS

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*From left: Luke Pollard, Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State in the Britain's Ministry of Defence, France's Minister of the Armed Forces Sebastien Lecornu, Poland's Minister of National Defence Wladyslaw Kosiniak-Kamysz, Italy's Minister of Defence Guido Crosetto, and Germany's Federal Minister of Defence Boris Pistorius attend a news conference after a meeting of defense ministers of five NATO countries to discuss coordinating their defense plans and support for Ukraine, in the village of Helenow, near Warsaw, Poland, Monday, Jan. 13, 2025.*

The defense ministers of Europe's five top military spenders said Monday they want to continue increasing their investments in defense but described meeting President-elect Donald Trump's challenge for them to [raise spending to 5%](#) of their overall economic output as complicated.

The defense ministers of Germany, France, Britain, Italy and Poland came together near Warsaw for a meeting in a new format that they established after [Trump was re-elected](#) last year. Their first meeting in this format of five NATO members was held in Berlin in late November.

The five are seeking ways to maintain their support for [Ukraine](#) as U.S. policy is expected to shift when Trump takes power. They also discussed how to strengthen [Ukraine's own weapons production](#) capacity.

The German minister, Boris Pistorius, stressed at the start of the meeting that they all support a just peace for Ukraine, one in which Kyiv has a say over its fate. There are concerns in Europe that Trump could push Ukraine to make unacceptable concessions to Russia.

The defense leaders also addressed questions of military spending after Trump recently called for NATO allies to increase their spending to 5% of gross domestic product, a level that no NATO member has reached — not even Poland, which is the closest, spending over 4% and expected to approach 5% this year.

Several of the ministers said that focusing on the number as a percentages isn't enough.

"I just think that a static debate about percentages doesn't really help us if it doesn't ultimately lead to the implementation of what NATO has agreed upon together, what the goals must be," Pistorius said at a joint press conference. "In my opinion, that's what matters."

He also said that for Germany to invest 5% in defense would mean spending a little more than 40% of its entire national budget on defense. "I think that would put an end to the debate very quickly," he said.

His Italian counterpart, Guido Crosetto, said his government knows it needs to spend more on defense but also needs to weigh that against reviving the economy.

"Increasing defense spending at a time of economic crisis is more complicated than at other times," Crosetto said. "If we combine the two, that is, if we make the European defense industry one of the ways in which we can revive the economy, we can combine the two."

French Defense Minister Sébastien Lecornu said that while there will be increases in security spending, they should not all go to purely military purposes but also should be used to protect society against cyberattacks, terrorism, and other non-military threats.

"And you're all repeating 2%, 3%, 4%, without really knowing what the point is," Lecornu said, responding to a reporter's question. "Well, let me be straightforward. The situation is worse than during the Cold War. It's worse than during the Cold War simply because we have new areas that have become militarized, and these are largely digital," Lecornu said.

"And you can see that we are in a world in which we can be defeated without having been invaded. And that means that the responsibility for the defense of our countries will go well beyond military issues alone," Lecornu said.