

## UK Agrees to Pay for Access to EU Defence Fund Amid Rising Russia Tensions

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— Categories: Defence & Security



The United Kingdom is preparing to contribute financially to a €150 billion European Union defence fund, marking a significant policy shift as the government seeks to strengthen security cooperation in response to escalating threats from Russia. The agreement, expected to grant British arms manufacturers access to lucrative contracts, comes amid wider efforts to reinforce defence ties across the continent.

The EU's new Security Action for Europe programme is designed to enhance defence procurement and production among member states and select non-EU partners. To take part, the UK must pay a share relative to the value of contracts awarded to British firms and comply with content requirements, ensuring at least 65 percent of the components are sourced from within participating countries.

Although formal negotiations are ongoing, internal EU divisions have emerged. France is reportedly pushing for higher UK payments, while Germany is advocating a more moderate approach. The UK, for its part, has maintained that its participation should focus strictly on defence cooperation and remain separate from politically sensitive issues such as post-Brexit fishing disputes.

This latest development follows Prime Minister Sir Keir Starmer's wider strategy to reset UK-EU relations. A newly signed defence and security pact with Germany has already established frameworks for joint weapons support to Ukraine, coordinated military planning, and cooperation on tackling illegal migration. However, critics warn that the UK risks becoming a secondary player in Europe's defence architecture if it relies too heavily on Brussels-led initiatives.

Supporters of the deal argue it will provide UK-based defence firms with access to stable procurement pipelines and open doors to collaborative manufacturing projects in areas such as air and missile defence systems, electronic warfare, drones, and artificial intelligence. In a period of growing geopolitical instability and questions over American security guarantees, the move is seen as a pragmatic hedge.

Sceptics, however, have raised concerns that the UK may end up subsidising European defence industries while gaining limited strategic influence in return. Some warn of the danger that participation could be used by EU states as leverage in unrelated negotiations.

Nonetheless, the government insists the arrangement is vital to reinforcing the UK's security posture and protecting national interests in an increasingly unpredictable global environment. With Russia's aggression showing no signs of slowing, ministers appear determined to secure deeper cooperation, on British terms, without rejoining the European Union's political structures.