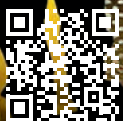


EUROPE DIPLOMATIC

MAGAZINE



**CHANCELLOR FRIEDRICH MERZ
IS AIMING TO TRANSFORM THE
BUNDESWEHR INTO THE STRONGEST
CONVENTIONAL ARMY IN EUROPE**



June 2025

Nº71

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26

36

32



6 BUNDESWEHR 2.0
Germany Bets Big on Defence

14 NEWS IN BRIEF
From around the World

20 IT'S NOT JUST FISH IN THERE
How to recover the armaments dumped in Switzerland's picturesque lakes?

26 HISTORY REPEATS ITSELF
The return of conscription foreseen as the threat of war grows

32 IRIS²
Europe's secure satellite system for strategic autonomy

36 ROGUE GALLERIES
Heists that shook the art world

42 THE FRENCH A69 MOTORWAY INITIATIVE
Aspiration, dispute, and halt

46 NIST DATABASE
Helping increase recycling of textiles and clothing

49 TIMELESS CHIC



Going for a coffee? ... Lock your desktop first!

BUNDESWEHR 2.0

Germany Bets Big on Defence

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A security officer with an M3M machine gun on the rear ramp of a CH-53 transport helicopter monitors the area during exercise Griffin Lightning 2025 in Lithuania

The geopolitical chessboard is shifting, and Europe is scrambling to adjust. With Donald Trump's return to the White House, European leaders now confront an inescapable reality: they can no longer rely on America's military umbrella as they once did.

President Trump's notorious scepticism towards NATO and his transactional view of alliances have sent shock waves through European capitals, from Paris to Warsaw. But it's Germany, of all places, that's emerging as the unlikely spearhead of Europe's defence renaissance.

For decades, Germany's approach to military spending could easily have been described as relaxed. Despite being Europe's economic powerhouse, it consistently fell short of NATO's 2% GDP defence spending target, often drawing muted anger from Washington. The *Bundeswehr*, Germany's armed forces, became a symbol of underfunded potential, plagued by equipment shortages, bureaucratic obstacles, and a political establishment over-cautious about any sort of militarisation. But the war in Ukraine, coupled with Trump's "America First" rhetoric, has now prompted Berlin, as well as other major European nations, to reassess their strategic positions.



NATO Secretary General Mark Rutte with German Chancellor Olaf Scholz



NATO Secretary General Mark Rutte welcoming Germany's Chancellor Friedrich Merz to NATO headquarters

Former Chancellor Olaf Scholz's 2022 declaration of a *Zeitenwende* - a historic turning point - following Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine wasn't just empty rhetoric. Germany has since pledged to hit the 2% NATO target consistently, a major departure from its post-Cold War complacency. In fact, Olaf Scholz started a €100 billion fund to modernise the military, but progress got slowed down by red tape.



Soldiers of the newly established Bundeswehr in 1955

However, with the ascension of Friedrich Merz to the chancellorship, the political winds in Germany have shifted dramatically, marking a sharp rightward turn in the country's defence and fiscal policies. Merz's government - an alliance of his conservative Christian Democratic Union and the centre-left Social Democrats - has moved rapidly to initiate the most radical overhaul of German military spending since the Cold War. In a historic vote, the Bundestag approved a colossal defence budget, one so vast that it has been exempted from the *Schuldenbremse* - Germany's normally very strict debt-limiting mechanism. Germany's defence spending has gone up and down over the years—it hit 4.9% of GDP in 1963 but dropped all the way to 1.1% by 2005. It wasn't until 2024 that Germany finally met NATO's 2% target. Now, Chancellor Merz wants to go even higher to keep the country safe.

So, the message is clear: Berlin is no longer playing around when it comes to defence. If spending reaches 3.5% of GDP in the next ten years, Germany could pour up to €600 billion into its military - the largest defence investment in German history.

Breaking the bank for security

The Bundeswehr has come a long way since its founding in 1955. Born in the tense early years of the Cold War, Germany's post-war military was built from the ground up as a purely defensive force, tightly integrated into NATO's strategy of deterrence. Back then, the focus was straightforward: heavy conventional forces, tanks, and artillery - everything needed to hold the line against the Eastern Bloc's massive armies. Even in those early days, technology played a key role, shaping how the Bundeswehr trained, fought, and planned for the unthinkable.

But when the Berlin Wall fell and the Cold War faded, the Bundeswehr faced an identity crisis. No longer staring down

Soviet tank divisions, Germany's military had to reinvent itself for a new era of unpredictable crises. Peacekeeping, disaster relief, and far-flung stabilisation missions became the new normal - from the Balkans to the Hindu Kush. These operations exposed glaring gaps: bulky Cold War structures were too slow, and equipment wasn't built for desert dust or guerrilla warfare. Lessons from Kosovo and Afghanistan forced painful but necessary changes—smaller units, faster deployments, and a hard look at outdated gear.

For years, Germany's military was the subject of various jokes within NATO circles - chronically underfunded, short on personnel, and making headlines for all the wrong reasons. Defective helicopters and even shortages of basic kit. But under Merz, that's all changing with the introduction of the new defence budget. But what's really remarkable is that this spending completely circumvents traditional fiscal constraints.

Just a few years back, this would have been political suicide. Germany's famous constitutional law designed to keep budgets strictly in check has been quietly side-stepped when it comes to defence. No fuss, no drawn-out legal battles. Just a simple, sobering message: when it comes to security, austerity isn't sacred any longer.



A Tiger attack helicopter

Friedrich Merz, a proper Atlanticist through and through, with longstanding ties to German industry, has positioned this unprecedented defence expenditure as both a geopolitical imperative and an economic opportunity. 'We can no longer afford naivety,' he declared during a recent Bundestag address. 'The world order has shifted, and Germany must adapt accordingly.'

His message has resonated strongly within conservative circles and drawn cautious support from some sections of the political centre. However, the policy faces fierce opposition from the Greens and Left Party, who condemn it as a dangerous escalation towards militarisation that could initiate a destabilising arms race. Even within Merz's Christian Democratic Union, fiscal conservatives have voiced concerns over what they perceive as an erosion of Germany's long-standing commitment to budgetary restraint. While these dissenters have reluctantly accepted the situation for now, their unease points to the tensions within the governing coalition.

The scale of expenditure is quite extraordinary. Billions upon billions are being committed to modernising the Bundeswehr's antiquated inventory - its ageing Leopard tanks, its obsolescent naval vessels, its fighter fleets operating well beyond their intended service life. Even traditionally neglected domains such as cyber-

warfare and unmanned systems are now receiving substantial investment. Most remarkable of all, Germany has begun openly contemplating the development of an independent nuclear deterrent - a proposition that would have been politically untenable as recently as ten years ago.



Leopard tanks of the Bundeswehr during exercises in 2010

Yet financial commitment alone cannot remedy the Bundeswehr's systemic challenges. The military establishment remains plagued by entrenched structural deficiencies: a procurement apparatus notorious for its very slow pace, critical shortfalls in technical personnel, and a bureaucratic system that impedes rapid innovation. Friedrich Merz has pledged to streamline these processes, including through proposed legislation styled as a "Defence Efficiency Act" to accelerate acquisitions. However, military experts and analysts maintain the spending will achieve limited impact without parallel efforts to remedy the defence establishment's systemic dysfunction.

In his first speech at the Bundestag, Chancellor Merz reiterated the role of the Bundeswehr as the tip of Europe's spear: 'In the future, the German government will provide all the financial resources the Bundeswehr needs to become the strongest conventional army in Europe. This is only fitting for Europe's most populous and economically most powerful country. Our friends and partners expect nothing less from us; in fact, they're demanding it.'

Overhaul, from top to bottom

After decades of underinvestment, Germany aims to put the projected €600 billion to good use and bring about a comprehensive military overhaul, shifting decisively from its postwar restraint to confront new European threats. The Bundeswehr's entire force structure is due for upgrades.

- The air force is undergoing its most radical modernisation in generations. A fleet of 35 cutting-edge F-35 stealth fighters will soon take over Germany's sensitive nuclear sharing role from aging Tornado jets, while upgraded Eurofighters, as well as other surveillance and tactical aircraft are being outfitted with advanced electronic warfare capabilities. Overhead, new Arrow 3 and IRIS-T missile defence systems will form an protective umbrella against drone and missile attacks.

- On the ground, Germany's legendary tank corps is getting its biggest boost in decades. The immediate focus is fielding over 100 upgraded Leopard 2A8 battle tanks featuring hybrid engines and AI-assisted targeting, while engineers work to fix the troubled Puma infantry fighting vehicles that left entire battalions grounded. Looking further ahead, development continues on the Franco-German next-generation tank project that promises revolutionary features like drone support and directed-energy weapons.



One of 12 IRIS-T SLM (Infra Red Imaging System - Surface Launched Medium Range) air defence systems acquired by the Bundeswehr. Manufactured by German company Diehl Defence, the €950 million contract - approved by the Bundestag's Budget Committee on 7 June 2023 - includes the systems and 216 missiles

- Germany's naval forces are bracing for heightened tensions in the Baltic and North Sea. At the heart of this upgrade are four massive F126 frigates—cutting-edge warships designed for long-range missions anywhere in the world, ensuring Germany can project power far beyond its home waters. But the real game-changer lies beneath the waves: a groundbreaking fleet of hydrogen-powered submarines, developed in partnership with Norway. These stealthy subs boast virtually unlimited underwater endurance and near-silent operation, giving the Bundesmarine a decisive edge in undersea warfare. Together, these investments signal a major shift—Germany isn't just preparing to defend its waters; it's building a navy ready for global challenges.

- While high-profile weapons usually steal the spotlight, Berlin is quietly strengthening the invisible, yet vital infrastructure that wins wars. At the top of the list: a major cyber defence overhaul to fend off continuous Russian and Chinese hacking campaigns, shielding everything from power grids to battlefield communications. Meanwhile, a new dedicated satellite network is in the works to ensure the military can operate securely, even if civilian systems go dark.



The German Navy ordered 4 F126 frigates (with an option for 2 more) for a total contract value of approximately €5.27 billion for the initial 4 ships to the Dutch shipbuilder Damen Shipyards Group, with German partners Blohm+Voss and ThyssenKrupp Marine Systems

The wake-up call of ammunition shortages - which left stocks embarrassingly bare - has sparked a full-scale effort to not just refill warehouses but finally meet NATO's minimum requirements. And it's not just about quantity: Lessons from Ukraine have accelerated the rollout of game-changers like HIMARS precision rocket systems, whose devastating impact against Russian forces proved the value of hitting hard - and hitting smart - from long distances away.

Together, these moves reveal a deeper shift: After years of underinvestment, Germany isn't just patching weaknesses - it's future-proofing its defences for an era where logistics, digital resilience, and long-range firepower decide who wins the next fight.

Between memory and military power

Meanwhile, public opinion remains conflicted. Many Germans still recoil at the idea of their country playing a more assertive military role, stuck between guilt over the past and a pacifist mindset. Just like former Chancellor Scholz's government, Friedrich Merz's administration will also have to walk a tightrope - boosting defence without triggering domestic backlash or alarming neighbours, some of whom are still weary of German militarisation. If you dig a little deeper, particularly among the EU's smaller states, you'll find a quiet but unmistakable sense of unease. And for countries with longer memories - the sort where school textbooks still devote chapters to that part of 20th-century history - the idea of a resurgent, heavily armed Germany may not exactly play as "feel-good story" of the year.



The German Bundestag is the national parliament of the Federal Republic of Germany

Across the European Union, member states are watching all this unfold with a mixture of apprehensive optimism, as well as some nervousness.

France: A cautious welcome, but eyes on the rear view mirror

French President Emmanuel Macron has shown measured praise for Germany's sudden burst of military ambition, which he has described as "a necessary evolution" for European security. There is though, an unspoken tension beneath the polite communiqués coming from within diplomatic circles in Paris at the thought of Berlin elbowing its way into what France has long considered its natural role as Europe's de facto defence heavyweight, dating back to the time of General de Gaulle.



Russia's invasion of Ukraine has validated Poland's prior plans to significantly expand its military forces

Poland: "Finally...but what took you so long?"

Over in Poland, where they've been spending billions on tanks and missiles while Germany was still fretting over balanced budgets, the mood seems to be more "it's about damn time!" Poland, which has been racing ahead with its own massive rearmament (spending nearly 4% of GDP on defence), with plans to field one of NATO's largest armies, views Germany's shift as belated but necessary. There's an undeniable pragmatism at play; Poland knows a stronger German military means a more secure eastern flank - even if old historical nerves still twitch at the thought of Bundeswehr divisions stationed near the Oder-Neisse line again.

The Nordics & Baltics: Relief, but with reservations

For the Baltic states and Finland, Germany's decision is broadly seen as a net positive - especially given Russia's aggression in Ukraine. A consensus is emerging - albeit a somewhat grudging one - that while Germany's renewed military ambitions are broadly welcome, there must be ironclad assurances this isn't merely about protecting German interests, but properly committed to the wider European security architecture.

Sweden and Denmark, meanwhile, have reacted with quiet approval, though Stockholm in particular has stressed that any buildup must align with NATO's broader strategy - not just Berlin's whims.



Southern Europe: Scepticism and budgetary envy

In Italy and Spain, reactions have been more muted and tinged with economic realism. It is felt that while Germany is in a position to spend billions on tanks and other armaments, the local populations are still trying to figure out how to pay for basic infrastructure. There's also a lingering suspicion that Germany's military revival might come at the expense of EU solidarity funds - diverting money that could otherwise flow southwards.

Austria, Belgium, and the Netherlands: Low-key anxiety

Smaller EU nations with complicated histories vis-à-vis German power are watching with cautious reserve. Austria, which has long prided itself on neutrality, has already issued vague statements about ensuring European security remains cooperative, not competitive.

Belgium and the Netherlands, meanwhile, are caught between welcoming a more robust German contribution to NATO and fretting over what it means for their own influence in Brussels, as they don't seem to want a Europe where defence policy is dictated solely by Berlin and Paris. Beneath all these reactions lies an uncomfortable truth: Europe has never quite figured out how to feel about German military strength. For older generations, the very word "Bundeswehr" still conjures darker memories. For younger ones, it's an abstraction - until now. Germany insists this is purely about collective security, not hegemony.



© BUNDESWEHR/MARCO DOROW

The Inspector General of the Army, Lieutenant General Alfons Mais, hands over the formation's colours to the new divisional commander, Major General Andreas Henne, during the ceremonial transfer of the Homeland Security Forces to the Army forces in Berlin, March 2025

Germany's big military spending boost can't be properly understood without looking at the US factor. With Donald Trump repeatedly questioning NATO's core promises - even suggesting Russia should feel free to attack allies who don't pay enough - Berlin's move makes strategic sense. On one level, it's about modernising equipment; on another, it's both a safety net against possible US withdrawal and proof Germany is stepping up as a serious ally.

While Chancellor Merz carefully describes this spending as strengthening "shared Western security", the real message is clear: Europe can't keep relying on America for its defence forever. The Bundeswehr's shift from protecting German soil to operating globally shows Berlin understands this new reality.



© EUROPA EU/CHRISTOPHE LICOPEE

Ursula von der Leyen and Volodymyr Zelenskyy at the Kyiv Railway Station in 2023

Whether this will work as planned remains unclear. Merz seems to believe that if Germany builds up its forces, other European nations will follow - creating a stronger, more united defence system. But history shows military expansions often bring unexpected problems. What's certain is that Germany's days as a

reluctant military player are over. The key questions now are: What sort of military power will Germany become? How will neighbours and rivals react? The answers will shape Europe's security for generations.

Wake-up call for the eu

European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen has put forward a bold new strategy - the "ReArm Europe" initiative - marking a major shift in how the continent approaches its security. In straightforward terms, it's Europe's answer to a dangerous world where old assumptions about peace no longer hold.

The timing isn't accidental. With Russia's war in Ukraine showing no signs of abating, and growing uncertainty about America's future commitment to NATO, Ursula von der Leyen argues Europe must finally take full responsibility for its own defence. "The era of European complacency is over," she recently told reporters in Brussels.

At its core, the plan tackles four key challenges. First, it aims to fix Europe's chronic underinvestment in defence by coordinating spending across EU nations. Instead of 27 countries each buying slightly different tanks or jets at inflated prices, the Commission wants joint purchases and standardised equipment - an approach that could save billions and actually make forces interoperable.

Second, there's a major push to ramp up weapons production. The embarrassing ammunition shortages during the Ukraine war exposed how Europe's defence industry had withered. The plan would fast-track factory expansions, with potential EU funding to boost output of everything from artillery shells to air defence systems.

Technology forms the third pillar. Recognising that modern warfare happens in cyberspace as much as on battlefields, the initiative allocates substantial resources to cyber defences, drone technology and artificial intelligence applications for military use. A particular emphasis is placed on developing European-made solutions to reduce dependence on American or Chinese technology.

Perhaps most ambitiously, von der Leyen wants to deepen military cooperation between EU members. This includes everything from helping smaller nations modernise their forces to discussing - cautiously - the potential for an EU rapid reaction capability. While careful not to step on NATO's toes, the Commission clearly envisions a more strategically autonomous Europe.

However, not everyone's convinced. Some Eastern European countries worry this might dilute NATO's importance, while cost-conscious critics question where the money will come from. Meanwhile, major arms manufacturers such as Germany's Rheinmetall and Diehl Defence, France's Dassault Aviation and Thales, the UK's



© BUNDESWEHR/MARCO BAHR

Soldiers from the 26th Parachute Regiment assault an objective in a simulated CBRN environment during the German Army exercise Cold Storm, 2025

Rolls Royce and BAE Systems, Sweden's Saab, Italy's Leonardo and Spain's Navantia, are jostling to protect their national turf. And with von der Leyen making this a personal priority in her second term, and events in Ukraine providing daily reminders of what's at stake, the political winds are blowing in the plan's favour.

As one senior diplomat put it: 'This isn't about militarising Europe - it's about ensuring we still have a Europe to defend.' The coming months will show whether member states can turn this vision into reality, or whether old habits of division prove too strong to overcome.



© EUROPA EU

MILEX 2025, a multi-level EU exercise (strategic, operational, tactical) held in Hungary with thirteen participating member states, tested the EU Rapid Deployment Capacity's alert and deployment procedures

But Europe's defence surge isn't just about replacing American protection. It also involves preparing for a future where U.S. strategic focus may shift - whether towards the Pacific, with China's growing influence, or inwards, amid domestic political turbulence. While many dismissed Trump's remarks about "encouraging" Russian aggression against NATO members as irresponsible rhetoric, European defence officials interpreted them as a sobering reality check. With Washington's reliability in question, Europe faces renewed pressure to strengthen its own defensive capabilities.

The big question is whether Europe can move fast enough. Defence projects take years, sometimes decades, to give tangible

results. Meanwhile, Russia's war in Ukraine grinds on, and Donald Trump is well and truly into his second term. Europe's sudden rush to boost its defences is a good first step - but let's be honest - speed alone won't solve years of neglect and disorganisation. The truth is, Europe still doesn't have the teamwork, production power, or united leadership to truly go it alone.

In a press statement released ahead of the European Council meeting in March, this is what the Commission President had to say: 'We are living in the most momentous and dangerous of times. I do not need to describe the grave nature of the threats that we face. Or the devastating consequences that we will have to endure if those threats would come to pass. Because the question is no longer whether Europe's security is threatened in a very real way. Or whether Europe should shoulder more of the responsibility for its own security. In truth, we have long known the answers to those questions. The real question in front of us is whether Europe is prepared to act as decisively as the situation dictates'. And in her concluding remarks, she added: 'Europe is ready to assume its responsibilities. Rearm Europe could mobilise close to €800 billion for a safe and resilient Europe. We will continue working closely with our partners in NATO. This is a moment for Europe. And we are ready to step up'.

Germany's role in this drama is particularly ironic though. After spending the better part of a century trying to downplay its military power, it now finds itself thrust into a leadership role it never wanted. Whether Berlin can rise to the occasion - without stumbling over its own hesitations - will determine not just Germany's future, but Europe's as well. One thing is for sure: the days of free-riding on American security are over. Europe must now learn to defend itself, ready or not.

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NEWS IN BRIEF

ROMANIA: OVER 300 SEARCHES IN €1.32 MILLION EU SUBSIDY FRAUD INVOLVING BEEKEEPING



© WIKICOMMONS

The European Public Prosecutor's Office (EPPO) in Timișoara (Romania) conducted 307 searches in 15 counties of Romania over the last two months, in an investigation into a suspected €1.32 million EU subsidy fraud involving beekeeping projects.

The investigation concerns 388 single payment requests submitted to the Romanian Agency for Payments and Intervention in Agriculture (APIA) during the 2023 and 2024 agricultural campaigns, for financial support in the beekeeping sector. These requests were co-financed by the European Agricultural Guarantee Fund (EAGF) and the national budget, each covering 50% of the amount granted.

It is suspected that the individuals behind these applications – all represented by the same person before the agency – submitted false or misleading documentation to obtain the subsidies. The beneficiaries allegedly did not own the bee colonies, beekeeping equipment or treatment medicines listed in their supporting documents and may have unlawfully obtained around €1.32 million in public funds.

The investigation and searches counted on the support of the EPPO Support Structure in Romania – Timișoara Territorial Office (Structura de sprijin a procurorilor europeni delegați în România – Biroul Teritorial Timișoara), the General Inspectorate of the Romanian Police-Transport Police Directorate-Timișoara, Brașov, Cluj, Galați, Craiova, Bucharest Regional Services and their subordinate units (Inspectoratul General al Poliției Române-Direcția Poliției Transporturi-Serviciile Regionale Timișoara, Brașov, Cluj, Galați, Craiova, București), the Timiș County Police Inspectorate – Economic Crime Investigation Service (Inspectoratul de Poliție Județean Timiș – Serviciul de investigare a criminalității economice) and the Alba County Police Inspectorate (Inspectoratul de Poliție Județean Alba).

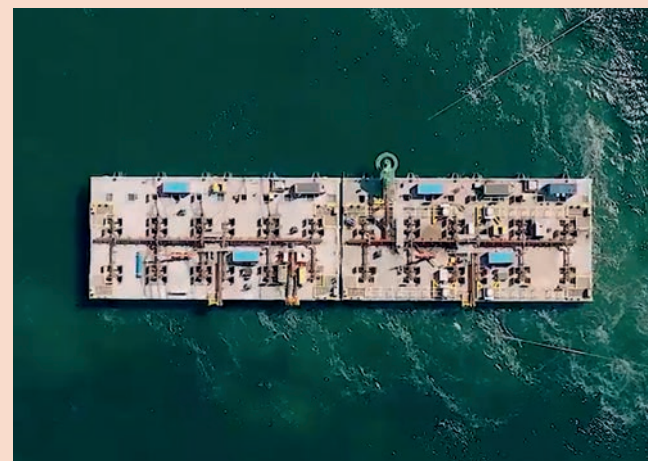
All persons are presumed innocent until proven guilty in the competent Romanian courts of law.

The EPPO is the independent public prosecution office of the European Union. It is responsible for investigating, prosecuting and bringing to judgment crimes against the financial interests of the EU.

FIRST BUILDING BLOCKS OF BELGIAN PRINCESS ELISABETH ENERGY ISLAND SUCCESSFULLY PLACED IN THE NORTH SEA

Construction has begun in the Belgian North Sea on the Princess Elisabeth Island, an artificial energy island located 45 km off the coast. After a successful sea transport operation, the first two of a total of 23 caissons have been submerged at their final location. Caissons are concrete building blocks that form the outline of the future island. In a later phase, the interior will be filled with sand to build high-voltage infrastructure that will connect new offshore wind farms. The work is being carried out on behalf of grid operator Elia Transmission Belgium (Elia) by TM Edison, a consortium of Belgian marine construction companies DEME and Jan De Nul.

Complex maritime operation



The transport and installation of the caissons at sea is a technically complex operation that began on Easter Monday, 21 April 2025. Each caisson weighs approximately 22,000 tons and measures 58 meters in length, 28 meters in width, and between 23 and 32 meters in height, depending on the presence of a storm wall. For the transport from the port of Vlissingen—where they are built—four powerful tugboats are used to tow each caisson via the Western Scheldt and the North Sea to the island site; covering a distance of approximately 53 nautical miles or 98 kilometres. The complete installation cycle—from departure from the port to placement and fixation at the final destination—takes about 24 hours.

Once at its destination, the caisson is connected to pre-installed anchors and positioned above the foundation zone

(see Figure 2). Advanced surveying techniques, continuous monitoring, and precise tidal measurements ensure that the concrete structure is lowered with great precision. The caisson is then filled with water, allowing it to descend to the seabed in a controlled and stable manner.

This is followed by the next construction phase: placing rock armour around the submerged caisson to protect it against potential summer storms, filling the caisson with sand, and preparing for the installation of the next caisson. Finally, the opening between the caissons is sealed to prevent sand from escaping later when the interior surface is filled.

Close monitoring of risks and weather conditions

The operation involves about ten vessels, including four tugboats, a multicat vessel, and dredging, transport, and installation ships. In total, around 150 people are participating. The operation requires extremely precise planning and is carried out in close collaboration with the Rescue and Coordination Centre (MRCC) in Ostend, the Joint Nautical Authority and North Sea Port. Emergency procedures, maritime evacuation plans, and strict communication protocols have been developed according to the highest safety standards. All involved have been trained accordingly.

The transport and placement of the caissons at sea are also highly dependent on tidal movements and weather conditions. The operation only proceeds if waves do not exceed 1.5 metres and wind speeds remain below 5 Beaufort. Two independent weather forecasting services and multiple buoy measurements provide real-time monitoring.

Belgium's electricity hub at sea

The Princess Elisabeth Island will be a crucial link in connecting future offshore wind farms in the Belgian North Sea. It is both technologically and economically the most efficient way to significantly expand Belgium's offshore electricity production and reduce dependency on fossil fuels.

MONACO TO HOST THE UIM E1 WORLD CHAMPIONSHIP, THE ALL- ELECTRIC RACEBOAT SERIES



© UIM/E1 WORLD CHAMPIONSHIP / SHUTTERSTOCK

The UIM E1 World Championship, the inaugural all-electric raceboat series, is scheduled to return to Monaco on July 18–19, 2025. This signifies the fifth location in the seven-race international schedule, succeeding events in Doha, Dubrovnik, and Lago Maggiore, and anticipating races in Lagos and Miami.

Nine international teams, each consisting of one male and one female pilot, will participate in the Monaco leg. These teams are supported by international superstars such as Rafael Nadal, Didier Drogba, Will Smith, Steve Aoki, and Tom Brady. Team Brady, co-owned by Tom Brady and Didier Drogba, secured victory in Monaco during the inaugural 2024 season.

French supporters will be closely observing Tom Chiappe of Team Rafa. Chiappe, a native of Rouen, exhibited a formidable qualifying performance in Monaco last year and is anticipated to be a leading contender this season.

Monaco's Dedication to Sustainable Innovation

The Yacht Club de Monaco is integral to the E1 Series, providing the private Ocean Club for VIP guests and serving as the headquarters for the E1 Pilot Academy. This academy is committed to educating the forthcoming generation of electric raceboat pilots. Graduates such as Sara Misir (Team Blue Rising) and Micah Wilkinson (Team Drogba) have secured podium placements this season.

The Monaco event highlights high-speed electric boat racing and underlines the Principality's prominence in sustainable marine innovation and electric mobility. The E1 World Championship, via its integration of advanced technology and celebrity participation, is consistently reshaping the future of motorsport.

CREDIT SUISSE SERVICES AG PLEADS GUILTY TO TAX CRIMES, AGREES TO PAY MORE THAN \$510M



© CREDIT SUISSE

Credit Suisse Services AG pleaded guilty and was sentenced to conspiring to hide more than \$4 billion from the IRS in at least 475 offshore accounts. The guilty plea by the Swiss corporation is the result of a years-long investigation by U.S. law enforcement to uncover financial fraud and abuse.

In addition to the plea, Credit Suisse Services AG entered into a non-prosecution agreement (NPA) with the U.S. Justice Department's Tax Division and U.S. Attorney's Office for the Eastern District of Virginia in connection with U.S. Accounts booked at Credit Suisse AG Singapore. Under the NPA, Credit Suisse Services AG agreed to cooperate with the Justice Department in ongoing investigations and to pay significant monetary penalties for maintaining accounts in Singapore on behalf of U.S. taxpayers who were using offshore accounts to evade U.S. taxes and reporting requirements.

According to the Plea Agreement, NPA, and documents filed in court: from Jan. 1, 2010, and continuing until about July 2021, Credit Suisse AG, which had ultra-high-net-worth and high-net-worth individual clients around the globe, conspired with employees, U.S. customers, and others to willfully aid U.S. customers in concealing their ownership and control of assets and funds held at the bank. This enabled those U.S. customers to evade their U.S. tax obligations in several ways, including by opening and maintaining undeclared offshore accounts for U.S. taxpayers at Credit Suisse AG, and providing a variety of offshore private banking services that assisted U.S. taxpayers in the concealment of their assets and income from the IRS and allowed for their continued failure to file FBARs. Among other fraudulent acts, bankers at Credit Suisse falsified records, processed fictitious donation paperwork, and serviced more than \$1 billion in accounts without documentation of tax compliance. In doing so, Credit Suisse AG committed new crimes and breached its May 2014 plea agreement with the United States.

Between 2014 and June 2023, Credit Suisse AG Singapore held undeclared accounts for U.S. persons, which Credit Suisse AG Singapore knew or should have known were U.S., with total assets valued at over \$2 billion. Credit Suisse AG Singapore failed to adequately identify the true beneficial owners of accounts and failed to conduct adequate inquiry about U.S. indicia in the accounts. In 2023, during the post-merger of UBS AG Singapore and Credit Suisse AG Singapore, UBS became aware of accounts held at Credit Suisse AG Singapore that appeared to be undeclared U.S. accounts. UBS froze some of the accounts, voluntarily disclosed information about those identified accounts to the Justice Department and cooperated by undertaking an investigation into the identified accounts.

Under the resolutions, Credit Suisse Services AG and, by extension, UBS AG, is required to cooperate fully with ongoing investigations and affirmatively disclose any information it may later uncover regarding U.S.-related accounts. The agreements provide no protections for any individuals. Pursuant to the guilty plea and the NPA, Credit Suisse Services AG will pay a total of \$510,608,909 in penalties, restitution, forfeiture, and fines.

Credit Suisse collapsed due to risk management failures, scandals, and massive losses, leading to its forced acquisition by UBS in 2023.

26 DASSAULT RAFALE MARINE FOR THE INDIAN NAVY



A Rafale M F3-R fitted with the RECO NG pod. French Navy picture

The Inter-Governmental Agreement between India and France has been signed today allowing the signature, in the presence of the Chairman and CEO of Dassault Aviation, Éric Trappier, of the contract for India's acquisition of 26 Rafale Marine to equip the Indian Navy.

This contract follows the announcement in July 2023 of the selection of the Rafale Marine, for which the Indian Navy will be the first user outside France, after an international consultation. It confirms the Indian authorities' satisfaction with the aircraft's capabilities and their desire to broaden the spectrum of its operational use.

This new acquisition testifies to the importance of the strategic relationship between India and France and the recognition of the Rafale as an essential vector of national sovereignty.

It honors Dassault Aviation's commitment to meeting the operational needs of the Indian Forces since the induction of the Toofany seven decades ago, and its determination, through its significant contribution to the 'Make in India' policy and the 'Skill India' initiative, to make its presence in India a success in the service of Indian interests.

The Rafale Marine will provide the Indian Armed Forces with state-of-the-art capabilities and the Indian Navy will benefit from the experience of the French Navy, which already operates this aircraft. Along with the 36 Rafale already in service with the Indian Air Force, the Rafale Marine will play an active role in guaranteeing national sovereignty and consolidating India's role as a major international player.

"On behalf of Dassault Aviation and its partners, I would like to thank the Indian authorities, with whom we have been working for more than 70 years, for their confidence in us and reaffirm our unwavering determination to stand by their side to contribute to India's expression of its sovereign power, its strategic challenges and its ambitious vision of the future," said Éric Trappier.

ABOUT DASSAULT AVIATION

With over 10,000 military and civil aircraft delivered in more than 90 countries over the last century, Dassault Aviation has built up expertise recognized worldwide in the design, production, sale and support of all types of aircraft, ranging from the Rafale fighter, to the high-end Falcon family of business jets, military drones and space systems. In 2024, sales amounted to € 6.2 billion. Dassault Aviation has 14,600 employees.

EU INVESTS €7.3 BILLION FROM HORIZON EUROPE TO ENHANCE ITS COMPETITIVENESS AND TALENT GROWTH

The European Commission is investing over €7.3 billion through its newly adopted Horizon Europe work programme for 2025 to strengthen Europe's research and innovation engine and global edge. This will drive cutting-edge science, accelerate the EU's green and digital transitions, and enhance Europe's competitiveness.

The programme will help attract and retain top researchers in Europe and offer targeted support to those affected by war and displacement. As part of these efforts, the Commission is updating the Marie Skłodowska-Curie Actions (MSCA) 2023-25 work programme part to offer more support for Ukrainian scientists and to launch a new MSCA 'Choose Europe for Science' pilot, which will offer more support and opportunities for early-career researchers, including competitive allowances and longer contracts.

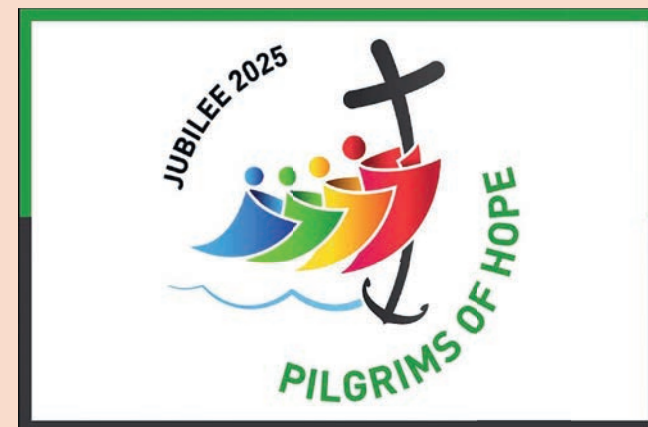


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This pilot is part of a €500 million package for 2025-2027 and the wider 'Choose Europe' initiative to make Europe a magnet for researchers, presented by President von der Leyen last week. The initiative focuses on three goals: keeping science free and open, investing in talent, and accelerating innovation in Europe.

Through the European Research Council (ERC), researchers relocating to Europe already receive a top-up beyond their grant, which has recently been doubled. Additionally, a new seven-year 'super grants' under the ERC will offer long-term support for top talent.

PUBLIC HEALTH ADVICE FOR TRAVELLERS ATTENDING THE JUBILEE 2025 IN ITALY



The Jubilee 2025, also known as a Holy Year, will take place in Rome and the Vatican City, Italy, spanning 2025 and concluding on 6 January 2026.

As one of the Catholic Church's major international events, it is expected to attract more than 30 million visitors. Traditionally held every 25 years, the Jubilee involves pilgrims travelling to Rome and the Vatican City to visit designated sites and participate in organized events and services throughout the Jubilee year.

WHO/Europe, the European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control (ECDC) and the Istituto Superiore di Sanità, Italy have jointly developed public health advice for the Jubilee 2025 to protect the safety and well-being of people attending the event.

"There is no current health risk in Italy, but preparation is key, as for any travel abroad when one can expect to be in crowds or experience extreme heat. This is important especially for certain vulnerable groups, like people with underlying conditions," says Rocco Bellantone, president of the Istituto Superiore di Sanità.

If you are planning to attend, make sure to follow these simple health tips to protect your health and well-being.

"Large-scale gatherings like the Jubilee 2025 are unique opportunities for communities to come together, but they also present specific public health challenges. Together with WHO and the Istituto Superiore di Sanità, ECDC aims to provide evidence-based advice to help protect the health of pilgrims and visitors and to support them in making informed choices before, during, and after their journeys," said Piotr Kramarz, ECDC Chief Scientist.

The public health advice covers various topics, including guidance on heatwaves and sun exposure, vaccination, food and water safety, vector-borne diseases (such as those transmitted by mosquitoes and ticks), alcohol and tobacco use, and sexually transmitted diseases.

"This year's Jubilee in Rome and Vatican City is particularly significant. Not only is it the first since the COVID-19 pandemic, but it will take place following the sad news of the passing of His Holiness Pope Francis," said Ihor Perehinets, WHO's Regional Emergency Director for Europe. "With such large numbers of people expected, following public health advice can help pilgrims and other visitors to have a safe and fulfilling experience and enjoy this very special opportunity to visit Rome and other holy sites."

MONACO'S CATHOLIC CHURCH STRONGLY OPPOSED TO THE NATIONAL COUNCIL PROPOSED LEGISLATION ON ABORTION

The National Council of Monaco has voted on Bill No. 267, a significant legislative proposal that is intended to regulate voluntary termination of pregnancy (VTP) in the Principality. The purpose of this measure was to allow abortions up to 12 weeks of pregnancy without requiring justification and to extend the period to 16 weeks in cases of rape.. The procedure was also guaranteed to be covered by social security, thereby fostering equitable access for all women, and a mandatory three-day reflection period was also included.

Monaco's approach to reproductive rights underwent a significant transformation with the introduction of this law. Medical personnel in Monaco were subjected to severe penalties for performing abortions in the absence of exceptional circumstances, such as dire medical necessity or cases of rape, despite the fact that abortion was decriminalised for women in 2019. Monegasque women were frequently compelled to seek abortions abroad, often under stressful and imperative circumstances, as a result of this legal framework.

Monaco's Catholic Church responded with robust opposition to the proposed legislation. Archbishop Dominique-Marie David, who represents the Archdiocese of Monaco, conveyed profound apprehensions about the bill's implications. In a statement, he characterised the abortion issue as "grave," stating that it has a significant impact on not only women but also families and the most vulnerable members of society, including expectant children. He advised against allowing the

debate to become a source of public pressure or division and emphasised the significance of preserving Monaco's identity and maintaining a balanced approach to such sensitive issues.



Archbishop of Monaco Dominique-Marie David

The Archdiocese expressed her willingness to engage with institutional counterparts to discuss the challenges posed by the proposed legislation, while also respecting the legislative process. She also called for thoughtful and respectful dialogue. This posture is indicative of the conflict between the enduring religious traditions of Monaco and the changing societal values.

Says Archbishop Dominique-Marie David : "While not all of the Principality's DNA is rooted in Catholicism, without Catholicism, the Principality is no longer in possession of its full DNA."

The current inquiry is, of course, whether the government will suspend the legislative process or convert this text, whether or not it has been amended, into a draft bill within the six-month deadline.

THE COMMISSION'S DECISION DENYING A JOURNALIST FROM THE NEW YORK TIMES ACCESS TO THE TEXT CONVERSATIONS EXCHANGED BETWEEN PRESIDENT VON DER LEYEN AND THE CEO OF PFIZER NULLIFIED BY THE GENERAL COURT OF THE EUROPEAN UNION

Through an application pursuant to the Access to Documents Regulation, Martina Stevi, a journalist for The New York Times, requested the European Commission to grant access to any text conversations sent between President Ursula von der Leyen and Albert Bourla, the CEO of Pfizer, from 1 January 2021 to 11 May 2022. The Commission denied the application on the basis that it did not possess the relevant papers. Ms. Stevi and The New York Times petitioned the General Court of the

European Union to invalidate the Commission's judgement. The General Court affirmed the action and nullified the Commission's decision.

According to The Court ruling the objective of the Access to Documents Regulation is to maximise the right of public access to documents maintained by the institutions. Consequently, in theory, all institutional documentation need to be available to the public. When an institution asserts that a document is nonexistent in relation to an access application, the absence of that document is presumed, in line with the presumption of truthfulness associated with that assertion. This presumption may be challenged based on pertinent and coherent evidence provided by the petitioner.

The Court observes that the Commission's responses about the required text messages during the proceedings rely on either assumptions or inconsistent and vague facts. In contrast, Ms Stevi and The New York Times have presented pertinent and coherent evidence detailing the existence of exchanges, particularly through text messages, between the President of the Commission and the CEO of Pfizer regarding the Commission's procurement of vaccines from the company during the COVID-19 pandemic. They have successfully refuted the presumption of non-existence and non-possession of the sought documents.

In this context, says the Court, the Commission cannot simply assert that it lacks the sought papers; it must furnish plausible justifications that allow the public and the Court to comprehend the reasons for the unavailability of those materials. The Commission has not provided a detailed explanation of the types of searches conducted to locate those documents or the identities of the locations where those searches occurred. Consequently, it has failed to provide a credible rationale for the absence of the required papers. Furthermore, the Commission has not adequately elucidated whether the required text messages were deleted, and if so, whether the deletion occurred intentionally or automatically, or whether the President's mobile phone had been substituted in the interim.

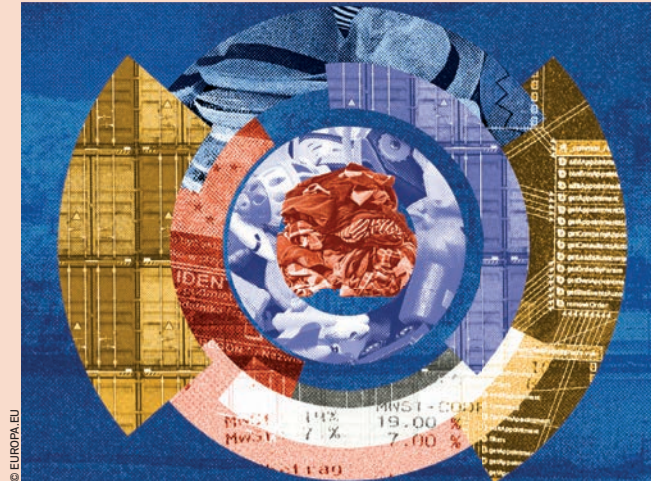


The New York Times main entrance in New York

OLAF LEADS MAJOR CRACKDOWN ON COUNTERFEIT FASHION SMUGGLING ACROSS EUROPE

The European Anti-Fraud Office (OLAF) has played a key role in a large-scale operation targeting the smuggling of high-

quality counterfeit designer clothing, footwear and accessories into the European Union. These goods, produced and shipped from outside the EU, pose serious risks to not only the health and safety of consumers, but also to the legitimate fashion industry and the European economy.



The operation, which began with OLAF opening enquiries in 2024, has already resulted in the seizure of over 1.8 million counterfeit items, with an estimated market value exceeding €180 million. These seizures took place in Austria, Belgium, Germany, Italy, and in non-EU countries, and involved close coordination with customs authorities in both EU Member States and third countries.

The counterfeit items—featuring logos of renowned fashion brands were so meticulously produced that even brand-appointed experts acknowledged their deceptive quality. The smugglers attempted to conceal the goods within containers behind layers of legitimately declared textile products.

In one of the most significant actions, nearly one million fake garments and accessories were intercepted at the Port of Trieste by the Italian Customs and Monopolies Agency (ADM) and Guardia di Finanza, with intelligence and operational support from OLAF. The items originated from Ambarli Port in Türkiye and were bound for the Netherlands. The full press release (in Italian) can be found here.

Director-General of OLAF Ville Itälä said: "This is a textbook example of what OLAF does best: coordinating across borders, analysing complex intelligence, and helping national authorities act decisively. Counterfeit goods hurt the EU's economy, rob legitimate businesses of revenue, endanger jobs, and put consumer health at risk. Fashion counterfeiting, in particular, is often linked to unsafe production practices and unethical labour conditions. This kind of illegal trade must be stopped at the source."

The wider impact of counterfeit fashion on the EU economy is profound. The industry loses billions in legitimate revenue each year, which also means fewer jobs, reduced innovation, and less tax income for public services. Moreover, counterfeit clothing and accessories may often contain dangerous substances such as heavy metals and toxic dyes, posing direct threats to consumer health.

OLAF enquiries are ongoing. Further investigations are being conducted into the supply chains and networks responsible for this illicit trade, with the goal of dismantling the operations and ensuring that counterfeit products do not reach European consumers.

INTERNATIONAL COALITION AGREES ON THE ESTABLISHMENT OF THE SPECIAL TRIBUNAL FOR THE CRIME OF AGGRESSION AGAINST UKRAINE

On Europe Day, the Commission, represented by Commissioner Michael McGrath, High Representative Kaja Kallas, the Council of Europe, the Prime Minister of Ukraine, Denys Shmyhal, and the representatives of an international coalition of states gathered in Lviv to formally endorse the establishment of a Special Tribunal for the Crime of Aggression against Ukraine.

All participants, as per the Lviv adopted Statement, welcomed the finalisation of the preparatory work required to establish a Special Tribunal within the Council of Europe. They committed to establishing the Special Tribunal, to the swift commencement of its operations, and to supporting it in its work.

Ursula von der Leyen, President of the European Commission, said: "As we celebrate Europe Day, we move closer to justice for the people of Ukraine. We stand fully behind the Special Tribunal, to hold to account those responsible for the heinous crime of aggression against Ukraine. The people of Ukraine deserve justice, and we will do everything in our power to make sure they get it."

The Tribunal will have the power to investigate, prosecute and try Russian political and military leaders, who bear the greatest responsibility for the crime of aggression against Ukraine.

The establishment of the Tribunal will be based on an agreement between Ukraine and the Council of Europe.

It is now for the Council of Europe to set up the necessary framework to establish the Special Tribunal, which will derive its jurisdiction from Ukraine.

Kaja Kallas, High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy/Vice-President of the European Commission said :

"Today we take a decisive step towards justice for Ukraine. The Special Tribunal will ensure that those most responsible for the aggression against Ukraine are held accountable. Every inch of Russia's war has been documented. It leaves no room for doubt in Russia's manifest violation of the UN Charter. It leaves no room for impunity. Russia's aggression will not go unpunished".

Once the Special Tribunal is established, Ukrainian national authorities will be able to refer ongoing domestic investigations and prosecutions related to the crime of aggression to the Prosecutor of the Special Tribunal. The evidence gathered in the context of the work carried out within the International Centre for the Prosecution of the Crime of Aggression (ICPA), which is hosted within Eurojust will also be transmitted to the Prosecutor of the Special Tribunal as appropriate.



Officer from Ukraine's State Emergency Service, disarming a Russian explosive device



Munition dumping into Swiss lake

Switzerland is famous for the beauty of its mountains and lakes. People travel from all over the world to see and to climb those mountains and to sail or swim in its pristine waters. Why on Earth would anyone think it was a good idea to pollute them with explosives and with weapons of various kinds? Well, it's one way to get rid of them albeit not necessarily on a permanent basis. We're not talking here about doing this a century or so ago, back in ancient history. No, the Swiss military continued to dump its ordnance in several famous lakes right up until the middle of the 20th century. It was done with typical Swiss precision and care, of course, with the sunken ordnance encased in more than two metres of fine sediments, which you might think would make everything safer, but in reality that sediment itself can be stirred up, causing it to shift and worsen visibility for divers as the waters get murkier and murkier. It still seems odd to have a great, even unique, asset like those lakes and to deliberately pollute them with things that, if not handled properly, could go "bang" rather suddenly. It would be a catastrophe but an avoidable one.

You may well wonder at this odd activity, especially now that there's so much concern about possible pollution. After all, explosives contain chemicals and not very nice ones, so how does one deal with possible leaks and the resulting contamination? Strangely, although contamination stories have been continuing to make headlines, Switzerland continued to use its magnificent lakes as military garbage disposal facilities. It makes no sense, despite the fact that water pollution checks carried out in the summer of 2019 claimed they pose no hazard to holidaymakers or bathers. It's believed that just in lakes Thun, Brienz and even Lake Lucerne there may remain some 12,000 tons of military munitions that were sunk there between 1918 and 1964.

It would not make good holiday advertising: "Come and swim in our beautiful lakes, go down and look closely at our tank shells and detonators, admire the workmanship and try not to set any

off." No, of course, no-one has tried to sell Swiss holidays in that way. I don't think it would attract hordes of eager tourists. Getting poisoned with chemicals or blown up by disused ordnance lacks popular appeal, somehow. Now Switzerland's Federal Armaments Office, known as Armasuisse, is trying to find ways to clear the lakes of things below the surface that are very clearly not fish. They were, not to put too fine a point on it, munitions, and they were buried at a depth of between 150 and 220 metres below the surface. Hopefully that's deep enough not to pose too much of a risk to little Pierre when he's paddling with his bucket and spade, although it would very clearly be much better if they weren't there at all. That's why Armasuisse has been appealing for ideas and plans to get rid of it of it all. In fact, the Swiss launched a competition (now closed to new entries), that was primarily aimed at academia and industry. It was not one that was ever likely to attract the local angling club. In any case, the Swiss Lakes' native species of aquatic life, such as perch, ferra or the Arctic char are becoming rarer. It's all because of Arctic warming, of course, caused by the climate change in which US President Donald Trump doesn't believe. Some professional fishermen are beginning to lose their jobs, especially those who relied on supplying important local restaurants with rare treats. At least this is making them all even rarer, so presumably it will put up the value of any that remain. Don't forget to avoid those made of metal and possessing fins or propellers. They may be more than they seem.



The lakebed, where ammunition is clearly visible

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IT'S NOT JUST FISH IN THERE – HOW TO RECOVER THE ARMAMENTS DUMPED IN SWITZERLAND'S PICTURESQUE LAKES?

A mine-launching shell from the First World War pulled out of Lake Zurich

As for the ways to track them – remember, they were buried with the aim of permanence – there are several possible methods, but none are simple. After all, although a vicious trout might bite you, an ordnance shell might blow you to smithereens. Your only compensation then would be the knowledge that your scattered and tattered parts would be providing food for the denizens of the deep. Or, since we're talking of lakes, rather than oceans, denizens of the not-very-deep.

But to look at this issue seriously, we have to remember that a variety of rarely required tools may be needed to help locate the sunken armaments. Once under the water, things tend to migrate through the natural action of tides and water movement. I lost my much-loved wedding ring in the sea off the South of France many years ago and never recovered it. Some people have suggested magnets to help locate the displaced weaponry but that wouldn't work if the metal used for construction was copper, brass or aluminium. After all, the people who designed and built these weapons didn't want other people to detect them, even if they never expected them to end up at the bottom of a lake. What's more, nobody with any sense would look for exploding armaments by poking through the sand and the silt with sticks, especially not metal ones (unless the searcher is feeling especially suicidal). However, the arms' composition does make it somewhat difficult to trace them using conventional methods. Another problem is that the water tends to be cloudy, restricting visibility for divers.

Still, Switzerland has previous experience of having to move armaments under difficult circumstances. In 2020, the Swiss authorities reported that they would have to move some 3,500 tonnes of explosives that were, at that time, stored in a depot not far from the village of Mitholz, a pretty and typically Swiss village of sloping roofs and Christmas card appearance in the canton of Bern and with 170 residents in 2020. It's also situated on the popular Lötschberg railway line. Back in 1947, an arms storage depot there containing some 3,000 tonnes of explosives exploded, killing nine people, so when a safety survey in 2018 decided the depot was still unsafe and therefore that it could explode again, it was decided that the entire village should be evacuated for a major cleanup. The plan is to order the evacuation for 2030 with the entire operation lasting for ten years, during which the residents will be relocated to somewhere that's (hopefully) safer. That is a seriously major operation that's unlikely to go down well with the residents, even if it means they're less likely to be blown up.

The Swiss military had become accustomed to disposing

of unwanted munitions by dumping them in water, where it was thought they'd be safe. But even allowing for the relative unlikelihood of an underwater explosion, there remains the risk of polluting the water with chemicals leaking out. Missiles and bombs contain quite a few, of course, and it's thought likely that they could harm wildlife and plants, as well as posing a danger to humans. The Swiss government has issued statements to the effect that there is very little cause for concern, saying that they regularly monitor the situation and have found no sign of danger. They said in a statement that there is no immediate cause for environmental concern and that their research "currently shows no negative effects from the dumped munitions." Now I would never accuse the Swiss authorities of dishonesty, but I can't resist the thought that "they would say that, wouldn't they".



Remains of the ammunition after the explosion at the Mitholz depot

As for the munitions themselves, they are submerged at a variety of depths, with some as deep as 220 metres and others at a relatively shallow 6 metres. Officials in the past had assumed that the water would absorb any blasts. Now, they're not so sure. Switzerland as a whole has



The Uri arm of Lake Lucerne, near Morschach, Switzerland

been a neutral country since 1815, so it never plays a part in armed combat elsewhere, nor is it a part of any military alliances, not providing military assistance to any other country (including Ukraine). It's hardly surprising that the Swiss would like to remove their sunken munitions, but moving them can be a pretty hazardous activity, too. After all, moving them could cause some of them to explode unexpectedly. They could also deteriorate or even disintegrate during removal, releasing some very nasty chemicals in the process. According to Mike Sainsbury, managing director of Zentica, a company specialising in dealing with unexploded ordnance, "it would be a painstaking process". One would certainly hope so!

There have been several proposals put forward to the Federal Armament Office for ways to remove all these devices, which vary in size from 4 millimetres to 20 centimetres and in weight from 4 grammes to 50 kilos. Getting rid of them all won't be easy, nor cheap. Removing them, according to Switzerland's Federal Office for the Environment, is likely to cost several hundred million francs. We are left to wonder what on Earth persuaded the Swiss authorities of the time to dump their unwanted armaments in such a seemingly slipshod way. At least they're not nukes, I suppose. Perhaps we should be grateful. Even so, as I mentioned earlier, in the years from 1918 to 1964, the army dumped a very large volume of unused military materiel into various Swiss lakes – especially lakes Thun, Lucerne and Brienz. It was certainly never a way to attract tourists, who generally don't like the thought of being blown up, especially when they're on holiday.

It's quite a big issue in Switzerland, despite government-level assurances that the ordnance is safe. We have to remember that Switzerland, apart from being a "neutral" country is so opposed to armaments that it refused to send any of its arms to Ukraine. I can't help wondering how many people have been made ill by eating too

much Swiss chocolate. It is very lovely stuff, after all. As for the armaments dumped in Swiss lakes, there have been some fairly silly suggestions put forward by the public. One caught my eye: why not empty all the lakes, clean them up and then fill them up again. I presume the person putting forward that idea had not considered the actual scale of such an operation. Getting to the moon might be easier and cheaper. Still, it shows that the public are putting their diverse minds to the issue. Other suggestions include the use of "mining magnets" (which wouldn't work on copper, brass or aluminium, of course). Then there's the proposal to use "mechanical grabs", although I suspect there would not be a great rush to be the driver. Or how about what was described as a "crawler", which rather resembles an underwater version of a kind of bomb disposal robot. Another proposal is for a kind of moving box, presumably remote controlled, that would gather up the ordnance along with quite a lot of the surrounding lake sediment. Supposing one of these bizarre suggestions were to work, there remains the question of where to store the resulting heap of old ammunition, some of it presumably still live. Oh, and just in case the possibility of pollution bothers you, a government report released in 2020 said there would be "negative impact of submerged munitions on water quality" That's nice to know.



A close-up view of one of the systems entered into the competition for ammunition salvage



The Mitholz depot a few days after the 1947 explosion (left) and the same location as it appears today



The Forel air firing range has left approximately 4,500 tons of mostly inert ammunition residues in Lake Neuchâtel

But the problems rumble on, whether the issue is anything to worry about or not. For a start, there are some 4,500 tonnes at the bottom of Lake Neuchâtel, thanks to a nearby army shooting range. The Swiss really scattered their armaments about, didn't they?

Elodie Charrière, an environmental historian at the University of Geneva's Institute for Environmental Sciences, has written a book about all those munitions dumped not only in Swiss lakes but also in French ones. She recently said that she was not surprised by the recent call for disposal ideas. After years of regular analysis of the issue by military authorities, she told SW1, an information channel, it's "logical" that they now consider how to clear it up, even if this might sound contradictory, given that no actual salvage operation is so far planned (as far as we know).

Meanwhile, according to Swiss official sources, lake munitions disposal sites are classified as "permanent waste storage sites", Charrière says. In fact, the ordinance doesn't oblige authorities to clean up the lakes as long as they are not deemed contaminated. A lake full of things that could blow up one day apparently doesn't count as hazardous in environmental terms. I bet all this publicity is doing wonders for the Swiss tourism industry. Come to the Swiss lakes – really make your holiday go with a bang!

The actual ordnance hidden down there is varied and some of it is quite old. I would have considered such aged explosive weapons to remain increasingly dangerous for decades to come. They include such delights as old Second World War bombs, grenades and various other explosive devices currently lying dormant (hopefully) at the bottom of Switzerland's picturesque lakes or buried at the feet of its equally picturesque

mountains. In any case, they are posing quite a headache for the Swiss authorities, who simply don't know how to get rid of them safely.

It takes us back seventy years to the town of Kandersteg in the Bernese Alps, when 7,000 tonnes of high explosives went off, killing nine people. That, you may recall from earlier in this article, was in the town of Mitholz, where the railway station and quite a lot of homes were also destroyed.

Today, the defence ministry says the risk of a second explosion has been underestimated for decades. It has now become "unacceptable" and "total evacuation" is the best solution. As you already know, that is exactly what is going to happen, despite apparently rendering quite a few people homeless for a decade. Still, it's better than another deadly explosion. In the case of Mitholz, the blast came at the end of the Second World War, when the town (village?) found itself stuck with a massive stock of unused weapons and ammunition. The dangers of hosting such a stockpile were exposed in 1946, when there was a huge explosion at a nearby fort at Dailly in the Canton Valais, which killed ten people. Mitholz blew up the following year and there was a third blast at a depot in Göschenen in 1948. The idea of making the ageing ordnance safe by sinking it in a lake caught on, and that's what happened.

Now, of course, we're all rather more concerned about safety and the environment. With the war newly ended people tended not to think far ahead. Today it's different. How exactly we confront and deal with the issue has yet to be decided, but at last something is going to be done. We just have to hope that whatever is done can be done without causing further explosions. Maybe (It's a big 'maybe') we'll all have learned not to just leave piles of deadly munitions lying about. Maybe we'll think seriously about how best to dispose of them safely. Knowing human kind, however, I remain largely unconvinced. Still, Switzerland is still a beautiful place with wonderful scenery, great skiing (if you enjoy such things), excellent chocolate and other luxurious foodstuffs: a great place for a holiday, in fact. Just be careful where you walk (or swim).

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Lithuanian conscripts

HISTORY REPEATS ITSELF

The return of conscription foreseen as the threat of war grows

This is an article I never expected to be writing. At least, I hoped I wouldn't be called upon to do so. Human ambition being what it is, however, things we thought we'd left in the past can return to haunt us, and such is the case, it seems, with conscription. I'm sure everyone knows what it is, even if they felt confident that they'd never have to experience it in person. But, as the old saying goes, "The best-laid schemes o' mice an' men Gang aft agley", (Scottish dialect meaning "often go wrong"). The expression comes from a poem by Robert Burns, all about a mouse. But mice going to war probably wouldn't raise as many eyebrows as armed battalions and entire nations doing so. Who cares about a handful of small rodents (apart from other small rodents, I guess)?

In case you still harbour any doubts as the actual meaning, conscription means the forced recruitment, mainly of young men but sometimes of young women, too, into their country's armed services in order to fight a war, or at least to be ready to if necessary to do so, either in defence of their homeland or in the hope of enlarging it by snatching bits of someone else's. I'm sure most civilians hoped it would never come to this, but now, as the threat of a real shooting war looms closer and closer it may be something we simply won't be able to avoid as an issue that has been consigned to history. Conscription itself (or recruitment by force or coercion if you prefer) is nothing new. It dates back to the Egyptian Old Kingdom, possibly as far back as 2600 BCE or so. Some leader finds himself (or herself) in need of some people to defend his or her kingdom and you simply round up a bunch of civilians, put swords and spears in their hands and having indicated clearly to them who exactly is the enemy you point them in that direction. You don't want to see them running towards others on your own side, shouting insults and threats. Once they know which side they're on it should be fairly easy, even for the simplest civilian.



Egyptian soldiers carrying axes and branches. A relief from the tomb of Hatshepsut depicting the expedition to the Land of Punt (1493 BCE), Deir El-Bahri

Now it seems that conscription is on the way back. The President of Latvia, Edgars Rinkēvičs, has warned that the countries of Europe really need (he said "absolutely") to reintroduce conscription in order to face up to Russia's endless aggression over Ukraine. President Rinkēvičs said the other countries of Europe should follow Latvia's lead, even though most had put a stop to conscription when the Cold War ended, although he understood why people may be 'a little bit nervous about the idea', adding that "strong reassurance is one thing,

but another is the real action being taken by the Latvian government". Latvia itself brought back compulsory military service in January, although its need may be more urgent than it is for some other countries, since it has a direct border with Russia that's very nearly 290 kilometres long. Furthermore, the decision came just five months after Russian troops entered Ukraine. With US President Donald Trump's threats about the security guarantees for Europe that were put in place some 80 years ago, there is a growing sense of alarm. If it were to happen for real, it is not the sort of development to be lost on Russia's own ambitious President, Vladimir Putin.



The President of Latvia, Edgars Rinkēvičs

It will have raised eyebrows in Europe, too. Several countries, especially in Scandinavia and the Baltics, have already reintroduced conscription, having been alarmed by Russia's growing threats and the size of its armed forces. "Today's Russian military," says Alexandr Burilkov, a researcher at the Institute of Political Science at Heidelberg University, "is larger and better than it was on February 24, 2022", adding that: "The Russians have hostile intent against the Baltic States and the EU's eastern flank." A study Burilkov co-authored for the Bruegel think tank at the Kiel Institute estimated that Europe may need an extra 300,000 troops to deter Russian aggression, in addition to the 1.47-million personnel it already has on active service. Burilkov thinks that conscription could prove vital in reaching such numbers, especially as some countries, including France and the UK, have struggled to recruit troops, which means that reintroducing some form of compulsory national service could prove unpopular and

therefore difficult. This is surprising, given that a large majority of French people are in favour of compulsory military service, according to a report published by Ipsos-CESI Engineering School. A YouGov poll suggests that some 58% of Germans support the idea for young people, although Italians and the British are divided on the issue and most Spaniards oppose it. If, as a young person freshly out of college you have plans for a peaceful but rewarding career of some sort you won't want to have those plans knocked off course while you are being trained to kill people you don't even know. Lithuania reintroduced conscription in 2015, just a year after Russia's annexation of Crimea, with Sweden doing likewise in 2017 and Latvia in 2023. It was the first European country to do so. A French expert, Benedicte Cheron, has said that it would be all but impossible to impose military constraints at present. That would almost certainly change, however, in the case of an invasion.

The sight of T-72BM 'Ural' tanks rolling across their green and pleasant lands would probably stiffen the sinews somewhat. Nine European countries – Greece, Cyprus, Austria, Switzerland, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, Norway and Turkey retained compulsory conscription when the Cold War ended, although France, Germany, the UK, Poland and Italy – NATO's biggest spenders – have no plans to bring it back. Not yet, anyway.



French expert and writer Benedicte Cheron

Being in the military has some advantages for conscripts, it's claimed, with a uniform of some sort proving attractive to the opposite sex. "All the nice girls love a sailor," ran a line in the 1909 musical, Ship Ahoy. In most cases involving the sailors I've met, I think their preferences would probably be for girls that are unlikely to be described as "nice" in the normal sense. As that song also points out at one point: "well, you know what sailors are". Yes, quite. I blame all those long weeks at sea with only male company. Even so, the apparent appeal of a smart military uniform

may not be enough to overcome a natural built-in resistance to discipline and to placing oneself in the firing line. Poland, the invasion of which by Germany launched the Second World War, ended conscription in 2008 but has recently announced plans to offer military training to some 100,000 civilians a year, beginning in 2027. It will be a voluntary scheme, according to Polish Prime Minister Donald Tusk, but with a system of what he called "motivations and incentives" as inducements to sign up. Exactly what those are has yet to be specified, but it has to be something more enticing than Green Stamps.

Within the EU, it was commonly believed that conscription had been consigned to the history books, but Russia's apparent taste for expansionism is changing public opinion. Take the EU, for instance, where defence policy is now under serious discussion and was the subject of a report in 2024 by the former Finnish President, Sauli Väinämö Niinistö.



Polish Prime Minister Donald Tusk

Opinion polls in several EU countries have been showing a growing support for either the reintroduction of national service or for full-blown conscription. We must bear in mind that the EU was not set up with a view to militarism. It's basically a trading club, facilitating cross-border trade by setting common standards in terms of health, hygiene and working standards. Despite the claims of its manifold critics, its aims are simple and peaceful. Since the UK left it, certain products have been harder to find in the British shops. It's hard to see the improvements to life promised by Brexit's supporters and cheer leaders, such as the leader of the far right Reform party, Nigel Farage, who wants to become Prime Minister, and the opportunist Boris Johnson. Looking across the EU, existing conscription policies differ from country to country. I was lucky in the UK, being just too young for the last call-up in 1960 (I was 12 years old that year), although one of my cousins seems to have quite enjoyed his period of military service. Today, conditions vary across the EU's member states, imposing different periods of service, differing sums of financial compensation and also retaining differing numbers of reserve forces. Niinistö's report pointed out the potential advantages if his "total defence" concept, while promoting what he called a "whole of society" approach to crisis response and defence preparedness.

Many people don't realise that the EU has a Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP), and while some point out the advantages of conscription, others remain unconvinced

that a defence force primarily made up of what are often poorly trained and ill-equipped amateurs with guns will save Europe from a takeover by Vladimir Putin. It's different in Italy, where Matteo Salvini's bill is intended to introduce compulsory military or civilian (an interesting definition, that) service of six months for all 18- to 26-year olds.



Italian Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Infrastructure and Transport Matteo Salvini

The growing power of far-right governments such as Italy's Lega means an increasing interest in conscription across much of Europe. Italy abandoned conscription in 2005. Spain abandoned it in 2001, France in 1996, Germany in 2011, Belgium in 1994 and the UK as long ago as 1963. There is no national army in Iceland and there has never been compulsory military service in Ireland. Popular opinion is changing, however, along with the reality on the ground, although far right politicians like little better than to have their young men in uniforms stamping around and carrying guns.

It's very different in Spain, where even the parties of the far right find they must avoid the subject of conscription. Its reintroduction hasn't even crossed anyone's mind, according to Defence Minister Margarita Robles, who is also a judge. Sociologist Rafael Azangith, formerly a professor at the University of the Basque Country, has written several books about military issues and on conscientious objection. With any conscription

system, however, you inevitably get people who will find ways to avoid it. During the Vietnam War the Americans called them "draft dodgers". But it's not just a matter of right and left disagreeing about compulsory military service, according to Alberto Bueno, professor of political science at the University of Grenada and considered an expert on military issues. Having a left-wing government won't necessarily save you from being called up to serve. "In countries that feel threatened, for example," he said, "even social-democratic parties are in favour of reintroducing military service." The percentage of the population in the Czech Republic that supports military service has risen since Russia's invasion of Ukraine, but it is still well short of a majority view and no party seems to be in favour of it. Bulgaria dropped conscription in 2007 and has no plans to reintroduce it, it seems, although military training for civilians is under discussion. Six months of military service for men remains compulsory in Austria, as has long been the case. That may be because the population of Austria is just a meagre nine million, and there has not been a strong military tradition there since the end of the Second World War.

Austrians have not forgotten either the country's civil war during Europe's inter-war years, when soldiers under the control of the Conservative Party opened fire on members of the Labour Party. It's not a good way to win elections, and as a result, the idea of a professional army without universal conscription has been ruled out by parties of virtually every persuasion. It's different again in Finland, where military service is compulsory for men between the ages of 18 and 60 and optional for women, too, between the ages of 18 and 29.

Of course, at the end of the day it may well not be the number of conscripts a country has assembled that decides the outcome of a war. It may, and more probably will, be decided by the power and efficiency of your nuclear arsenal and the range and accuracy of your delivery system.



Swiss, German and Austrian soldiers train at the Allentsteig military training area in 2025

Russia, it seems, likes to brag about just how effective its nuclear weapons are. It's claimed that one particular set of messages it put out made clear that Britain and France would be Moscow's primary targets. One of Putin's merry men is alleged to have claimed the efficacy of one particular type of Russian missile by saying: "One Sarmat (the missile in question) means minus one Great Britain." It's a rather clumsy way to put it, but I suppose English is unlikely to have been his native language and diplomacy not his strong point. Nuclear arms have not been used in an international conflict since the bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki towards the end of the Second World War. I imagine most people hoped they'd never be used again, but humankind being what it is that may prove to have been a vain hope.



Russian RS-28 Sarmat ICBM missile

We should remember the experience of one 13-year-old Japanese girl, Setsuko Thurlow, who had the misfortune to be less than two kilometres from the spot where the world first saw an atomic weapon used in anger. "Little Boy", as the weapon was ironically named, exploded less than 600 metres above the Japanese city of Hiroshima, ensuring that unhappy city's permanent place in history. Incidentally, according to Annie Jacobsen's excellent but terrifying book "Nuclear War – a Scenario" Little Boy was just 3.5 metres long and weighed 4,400 kilos. Young Setsuko survived but could neither see nor move for some time. Back then there were no missiles capable of carrying such a load, so it was dropped instead from a military aircraft. Ah, the ingenuity of the military mind!



A recruitment poster in Russia

If you're looking for a positive angle to emerge from the carnage, at least it probably means that compulsory conscription is less likely. The reason Putin has such a down on France and the UK, it seems, is that he accuses both countries of leaking his military secrets to Russia's enemies, raising the question of where and how they obtained them. By that, I presume he means they may have leaked military secrets of some kind (of exactly what kind I cannot imagine) to those countries opposed to Putin's intention to seize all or parts of all the countries that are not currently under the control of Russia. He seems to think Russia should own everywhere. It would certainly add piquancy to him singing that song "If I Ruled the World", if he should ever choose to do so, because unlike the character in the musical, Pickwick, from which the song came, Putin really would like to rule the world and apparently thinks he should. Pickwick is, of course, based on the Charles Dickens 19th century novel, the Pickwick Papers. The song continues: "If I ruled the World, every day would be the first day of spring", whereas I rather suspect that the Putin version would go: If I ruled the world, every day would be the end of it all." It's an odd way to view the planet Earth.



Ukrainian Airborne assault troops

But back to the topic of conscription. Ukraine is trying to recruit young Ukrainians, aged 18 to 24, to join the fight against Russian forces for one year. Kyiv is promising quite a sizeable salary, plus a generous bonus and an interest-free loan to help

with a house purchase, assuming they survive long enough to get it. It won't be an easy sell, but in a country under constant drone attack it will undoubtedly get takers. Putin is not popular there, nor ever has been. It was in the streets of Kyiv that I bought from a street trader a roll of lavatory paper with Putin's picture on every sheet. The pictures have sadly faded somewhat in the years since, although Putin in person, sadly, has not. Since the war began in earnest, Ukraine has been engaged in a major recruitment drive but has only succeeded in signing up some 500 or so would-be recruits according to Pavlo Palisa, President Volodymyr Zelenskyy's military adviser.

HALF OF EUROPEAN COUNTRIES DO NOT HAVE CONSCRIPTION

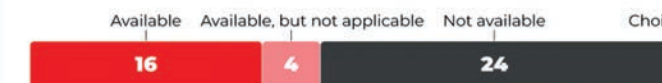
Despite the deteriorating security situation and rising political tensions, almost half of European countries do not have compulsory military service in 2025. At the same time, some of them are already considering a return to the conscription system.

European countries with compulsory military service in 2025*

- Available
- Available, but not applicable
- Not available
- Choice



Structure of European countries by the presence of compulsory military service in 2025*



Source: World Population Review

*% of the beginning of May 2025

@TopLeadEU

Europeans are nervous following US President Donald Trump's insistence that they must look to their own defence. The United States (under Trump, at least) won't help them. The UK has so far ruled out conscription, although the country has increased its defence spending. In Italy, meanwhile, Defence Minister Guido Crosetto has ruled out reintroducing national service but has spoken in favour of creating a reserve force. We should not, perhaps, blame Vladimir Putin for everything; he has surrounded himself with advisors who are in the main conspiracy theorists. Putin himself, partly as a result, sees enemies wherever he looks, most of them plotting his downfall. He certainly dislikes the United States. He once said: "America does not need allies, it needs vassals". Wherever there are flare-ups and conflicts, he refuses to accept that they're examples of resistance to corrupt governments. He believes they're all CIA plots aimed at bringing down any governments that are sympathetic to Moscow. And, as I said, he believes all those

conspiracy theories his war-mongering supporters believe. One of Putin's closest advisors, Nikolai Patrushev, secretary of Russia's Security Council, has said that the United States "would very much like Russia not to exist as a country". He seems to believe that the West is just awaiting an opportunity to invade. Well, Vlad, you're wrong, and you should not allow such fantasies to inform your decisions.



Swiss soldiers

According to Mark Galeotti in his fascinating but worrying book, "We Need to Talk About Putin" believes that the "great powers" must have sphere of influence. There can be no real "independence". That's why he "punished" Georgia and Ukraine: he saw them as trying to get closer to the West." Incidentally, as a reader of histories interested in the nineteenth century in political terms, he sees global influence as a reflection of real power. He believes, of course, that Russia itself is a "great power" and therefore that it should not regard itself as being constrained by international laws and agreements. And Putin, who is not very tall, always wants to seem to be a tough guy.

So here we are again, with an enemy whose animosity is based on a belief that his country should be in charge of everything, everywhere, and who is unwilling to consider peace, which he seems to see as a sign of weakness and an invitation to invaders. If he ever designed a computer game he could make a fortune, but such things lack real blood and bullets and bombs. No fun there, then, by Putin's standards. Will it, can it all end peacefully? I don't know. Certainly not if Putin gets his way and the West declines to stand up to him. Whether or not that defiance may rest on conscription and the willingness of ordinary citizens to fight is harder to predict. After all, Putin doesn't seem to want to "keep the red flag flying here"; he'd rather simply subjugate the people of the world under his impeccable (in his view) rule. I hope he's wrong.

Jim Gibbons

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Artist's impression of the
Amazonas Nexus satellite

IRIS²: EUROPE'S SECURE SATELLITE SYSTEM FOR STRATEGIC AUTONOMY

In a time when digital connection is fundamental to economic development, national security, and societal resilience, the European Union (EU) has initiated a transformative effort to enhance its strategic independence in space-based communications. The Infrastructure for Resilience, Interconnectivity and Security via Satellite (IRIS²) programme embodies the EU's ambitious effort to create a sovereign, secure, and resilient satellite communication infrastructure.

The inception of IRIS² arises from the EU's acknowledgement of the essential requirement for autonomous and secure communication infrastructures. The growing dependence on non-European satellite services, like SpaceX's Starlink, has exposed weaknesses in the EU's digital sovereignty. In 2022, the European Commission proposed the IRIS² programme, which aims to establish a multi-orbital satellite constellation to provide secure and reliable communication services for both governmental and commercial users.

IRIS² is designed to fulfil certain strategic objectives:

1. **Augmenting Security and Resilience:** Through the provision of encrypted and secure communication channels, IRIS² seeks to protect sensitive governmental information and vital infrastructure from cyber attacks and espionage.

2. **Advancing Digital Sovereignty:** The initiative aims to diminish the EU's reliance on external satellite services, so strengthening its independence in the digital sphere.

3. **Bridging the Digital Divide:** IRIS² aims to provide high-speed internet access to underserved and distant areas in Europe and Africa, tackling the problem of connection "dead zones".

4. **Facilitating Crisis Management:** The system will enable effective communication during emergencies, natural disasters, and humanitarian crises, thereby augmenting the EU's crisis response capabilities.

IRIS² will consist of a constellation of 290 satellites, strategically located in Low Earth Orbit (LEO) and Medium Earth Orbit (MEO) to provide extensive coverage and low-latency communication services. The incorporation of satellites in various orbits facilitates redundancy and resilience, guaranteeing continuous services despite unfavourable conditions.

The European Commission has assigned the development and operation of IRIS² to the SpaceRISE consortium, which comprises prominent European aerospace and telecommunications firms, including Eutelsat, SES, and Hispasat spacerise.eu. This public-private cooperation model facilitates the amalgamation of expertise, resources, and innovation from both sectors.

The European Space Agency (ESA) is essential in facilitating the program by providing technical competence and coordination, so assuring conformity with overarching EU space policies and objectives.



Amazon's Project Kuiper payload before being mounted atop of the Atlas V rocket

The IRIS² programme is supported by a significant investment of €10.6 billion, derived from the EU budget, ESA contributions, and private sector investments. This financial investment highlights the EU's resolve to create a strong and independent space communication system.

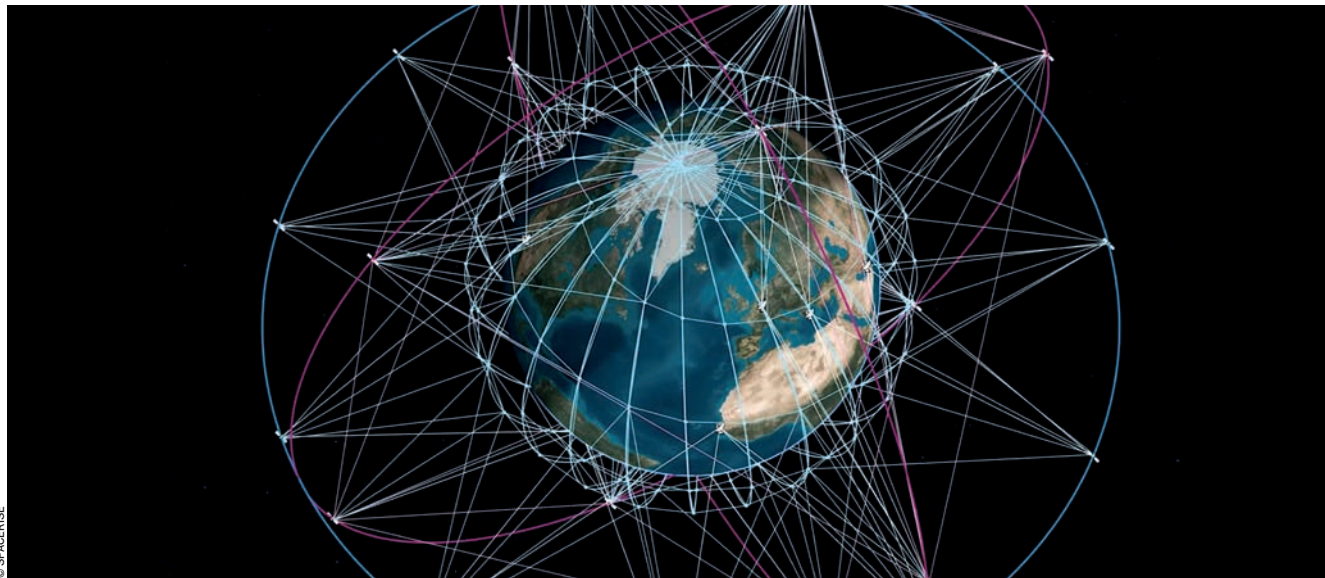
Although IRIS² resembles other satellite constellations such as Starlink and Amazon's Project Kuiper in delivering broadband services, it differentiates itself by prioritising security, resilience, and governmental applications. In contrast to its commercial equivalents, IRIS² is designed to address the distinct requirements of EU member states, emphasising secure communications, crisis management, and strategic autonomy.

The execution of IRIS² poses numerous challenges:

- **Technological Intricacy:** Creating a multi-orbital constellation with enhanced security capabilities necessitates substantial technological advancement and collaboration.

- **Regulatory Harmonisation:** Achieving adherence to international space laws and regulations among member states requires rigorous governance mechanisms.

- **Competitive Landscape and Market Dynamics:** IRIS² must manoeuvre in a market dominated by established entities, necessitating strategic positioning and a compelling value proposition.



A depiction of Europe's projected multi-orbit broadband constellation

The IRIS² initiative is set to begin initial operations by 2027, with complete deployment expected by 2030. With the EU emphasising digital sovereignty and strategic autonomy, IRIS² is anticipated to be pivotal in influencing Europe's space and communication framework.

The system will facilitate a diverse array of governmental applications, primarily in the areas of surveillance (e.g., border and maritime monitoring), crisis management (e.g., humanitarian assistance), safeguarding and connectivity of critical infrastructures (e.g., secure communications for EU embassies), as well as security and defence (e.g., maritime emergencies, force deployment, EU external operations, law enforcement actions). The system will facilitate numerous commercial applications, including those in the transportation sector (maritime, railway, aircraft, and automobile), intelligent energy grid management, finance, overseas industrial operations, remote healthcare, and rural connectivity (back-hauling).

The system will facilitate mass-market applications such as mobile and fixed broadband satellite access, satellite trunking for B2B services, satellite connectivity for transportation, enhanced networks via satellite, and satellite broadband and cloud-based services.

Utilising innovative technologies, such as 5G standards, the multi-orbital EU secure connection system would guarantee the sustained provision of dependable, secure, and economical satellite connectivity services on a worldwide scale. This will facilitate the advancement of high-speed broadband and uninterrupted connectivity across the Union, eliminating connectivity voids and enhancing cohesion among Member State territories, while also enabling connectivity in strategically significant geographical regions beyond the Union, particularly the Arctic and

Africa.

It will also encourage the implementation of innovative and disruptive technologies and novel business models, particularly utilising the "New Space" ecosystem.

The effective implementation of IRIS² will increase the EU's secure communication capabilities and foster innovation, economic growth, and international collaboration in the space industry.

IRIS² represents the EU's strategic objective to establish its independence in the vital sector of satellite communications. IRIS² seeks to create a secure, resilient, and sovereign communication infrastructure by coordinated technology advancement, industrial collaboration, and policy alignment.

Spacerise consortium: pan-european collaboration

SpaceRISE, the consortium comprising Eutelsat, Hispasat and SES, has signed the agreement with the European Commission (EC) and the European Space Agency (ESA) that will see the consortium design, deliver and operate the Infrastructure for Resilience, Interconnectivity and Security by Satellite (IRIS²) for a period of 12 years.

The SpaceRISE consortium, entrusted with the implementation of this ambitious project, includes three leading European satellite network operators—SES SA, Eutelsat SA, and Hispasat S.A.—supported by a core team of European subcontractors from the satcom ecosystem. Key partners include Thales Alenia Space, OHB, Airbus Defence and Space, Telespazio, Deutsche Telekom, Orange, Hisdesat, and Thales SIX.

This collaboration emphasises a commitment to competitiveness and innovation, ensuring that Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) and new market entrants have opportunities within the supply chain.

The 12-year concession contract establishes a robust public-private partnership to enable both governmental and commercial connectivity services by 2030.

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The Museum of Ennigaldi-Nanna, dating back to around 530 BC, is considered the world's first known museum. Located in Ur (modern-day Iraq), it was established by Princess Ennigaldi, the daughter of the Babylonian King Nabonidus, and it displayed artefacts from earlier Mesopotamian civilisations. What makes it remarkable for such an early period is that the items were labelled with descriptions in three languages. The museum was discovered in 1925 by the British archaeologist Sir Leonard Woolley during excavations in the area.

What we now recognise as modern museums began to emerge in 17th- and 18th-century Europe. Initially, they took the form of private collections owned by wealthy aristocrats - known as "cabinets of curiosities" - before gradually evolving into public institutions dedicated to education and preservation. The Ashmolean Museum in Oxford, UK, is widely regarded as the first modern public museum, established in 1683 after Elias Ashmole donated his private collection to the University of Oxford. Open to the public and designed for learning, it represented a major shift from earlier privately held collections.

The prestigious British Museum was founded in London in 1753 by an Act of Parliament, built largely on the collections of the physician Sir Hans Sloane. It opened its doors to the public in 1759, setting a benchmark for museums to come. Not long after, Paris's Louvre Museum followed suit in 1793, repurposing a royal palace into a public treasure house in the wake of the French Revolution. Both institutions embodied the Enlightenment's core belief: that great art and artefacts should be preserved, curated, and - above all - shared with the world.

Yet with museums came a new challenge: keeping their treasures safe. These weren't just displays - many were priceless artefacts and masterpieces worth millions. The first museum theft on record isn't precisely documented, but among the earliest known cases, one dates back to the 19th century - by which time museums had already become established public institutions.

While not the first museum theft, the 1911 disappearance of Da Vinci's *Mona Lisa* from the Louvre marked the first truly sensational art heist. The culprit was Vincenzo Peruggia, an Italian handyman convinced the masterpiece belonged in Italy. After hiding overnight in the museum, he simply walked out with the painting tucked under his coat. Though recovered two years later in Florence—and returned to the Louvre, where it remains today—the theft stunned the world.



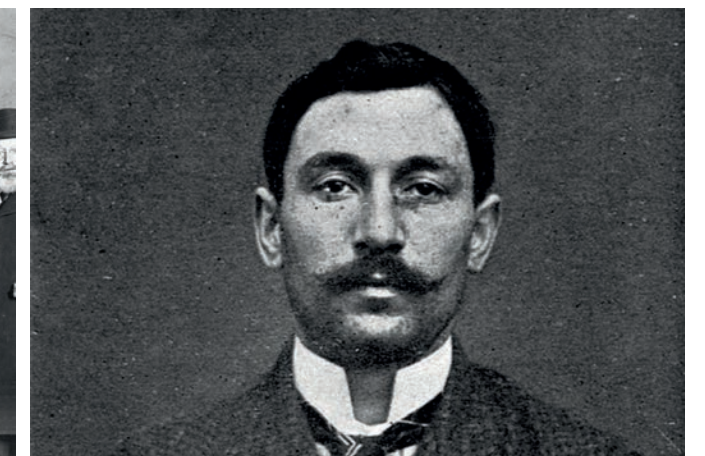
The Polish Order of the White Eagle breast star (Brillantgarnitur) is a brooch studded with brilliant cut diamonds and rubies, dating back to 1746-1749. Stolen from the Green Vault, Dresden

In 2002, professional thieves stole two Van Goghs (*View of the Sea at Scheveningen* and *Congregation Leaving the Reformed Church in Nuenen*) from Amsterdam's Van Gogh Museum. The paintings resurfaced in 2016 during a Naples mafia probe. Even bolder was the 2010 raid on Paris's Musée d'Art Moderne, where a single masked thief made off with five modern masterpieces by Picasso, Matisse, Braque, Modigliani, and Léger. Valued at €100 million, these works remain missing - one of modern art's most devastating losses.

One of the largest art thefts in modern history took place in Germany in 1919. The Dresden Green Vault heist, targeting



The return of the Mona Lisa (La Gioconda) to the Louvre Museum in April 1914, after its theft by Vincenzo Peruggia (right)



© PUBLIC DOMAIN

ROGUE GALLERIES

HEISTS THAT SHOOK THE ART WORLD

priceless 18th-century royal jewels, included a sword studded with 800 diamonds and was valued at over €100 million. Carried out by an organised gang, some of the stolen items were eventually recovered in 2022.

In 2023, the British Museum in London was rocked by scandal when it emerged that a staff member had stolen thousands of small artefacts - including gold jewellery and semi-precious stones. The theft exposed glaring security flaws in one of the world's top cultural institutions, sending shock waves through the museum community. While some items have been recovered, hundreds remain missing as the investigation continues.

In a daring 1990 robbery at Boston's Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum, thieves posing as police officers carried out what remains the most valuable art theft in history. They made off with thirteen priceless works, including Vermeer's *The Concert*, works by Rembrandt, Degas and Manet - collectively valued at \$500 million (€460 million). Not a single artwork has been recovered, but the museum continues to display the empty frames in their original locations.

In the early hours of the morning of 25 January 2025, thieves blasted their way into the Drents Museum in Assen, Netherlands, making off with priceless artefacts from Romania's ancient Dacian civilisation. The explosive entry caused severe structural damage to the historic building. The stolen treasures include the legendary 2,500-year-old Coțofenești Golden Helmet and three gold bracelets from the same pre-Roman conquest era - collectively valued at €6 million. While Dutch police have arrested several suspects from North Holland and continue intensive recovery efforts, these irreplaceable cultural artefacts remain missing.

The incident has sparked outrage, with calls for intensified international cooperation to recover stolen cultural artefacts. These repeated thefts underscore the persistent challenges in protecting our shared heritage, highlighting the urgent

need for enhanced security measures in museums and galleries throughout Europe.

On average, only 5 to 10% of stolen artworks are ever recovered (*Source: Interpol, which maintains a global stolen art database*).

But why is the recovery rate so alarmingly low? The answer lies in the well-established routes thieves follow: Many pieces vanish swiftly into the hands of unscrupulous private collectors who deliberately avoid provenance checks. Stolen art is quietly sold on the black market or used as currency in criminal dealings, and there's a growing platform on the Dark Web for discreetly advertising high-value cultural loot. With such shadowy distribution channels, masterpieces often disappear without a trace.



Some of the items taken during the Graff Diamonds robbery

In some cases, thieves resort to destroying stolen items if they can't be sold discreetly. Even when works survive, recovery grows exponentially harder once they cross borders - despite Interpol's rapid response protocols. Legal complexities and jurisdictional barriers create near-insurmountable obstacles. Compounding the problem, many smaller artefacts lack proper documentation, making identification and restitution more difficult.

Unlike famous artworks - which are well-documented and instantly identifiable - jewellery presents far greater opportunities for criminals. Its compact size allows for easy concealment and cross-border smuggling, while precious metals and stones can be melted down or recut, effectively making them untraceable.

The anonymity of jewels makes them ideal for underground sales. Pawn shops, black markets, and online platforms provide ready outlets, unlike the scrutinised art world. Stolen royal jewellery, for instance, is so rarely recovered - pieces often disappear into workshops where they are rapidly stripped.

The 2008 Harry Winston heist in Paris remains one of history's most brazen jewellery robberies. Disguised in wigs and women's clothing, a gang stormed the luxury boutique during business hours, holding staff at gunpoint while they emptied display cases of €80 million worth of high-end jewels.

While authorities later recovered some items and apprehended several suspects, the clinical execution of this daring operation left a lasting impression.



The men convicted of the £40 million Graff jewellery robbery

Throughout history, certain jewellery heists have captured global attention through their audacity and meticulous planning. Among the most notorious was the 2003 Antwerp Diamond Heist, where thieves breached the high-security vault of Belgium's Diamond Centre, escaping with diamonds, gold, and gems valued at over \$100 million. Though the mastermind, Leonardo Notarbartolo, was apprehended, most of the stolen items remain missing. London's 2015 Hatton Garden heist achieved similar notoriety when a gang of elderly men spent Easter weekend drilling through two metres of reinforced concrete to loot safety deposit boxes of jewels worth £14 million. Their improbable demographics and clinical execution inspired multiple film adaptations.

In France, the 2013 Carlton Hotel robbery saw a lone gunman stroll into a Cannes diamond exhibition and depart with €100 million in jewels—vanishing without trace in an unsolved case.

London's Graff Diamonds robbery in 2009 demonstrated equal flair, with two theatrically disguised men stealing 43 pieces worth £40 million. Despite an elaborate escape plan, authorities eventually tracked them down. The 2008 Harry Winston heist in Paris remains one of history's most brazen jewellery robberies. Disguised in wigs and women's clothing, a gang stormed the luxury boutique during business hours, holding staff at gunpoint while they emptied display cases of €80 million worth of jewels. While authorities later recovered some items and apprehended several suspects, the operation's clinical execution left a lasting impression.

These heists, each distinct in method and mystery, continue to captivate audiences and inspire Hollywood productions. The film industry has spawned numerous blockbusters based on elaborate theft plots, including *The Thomas Crown Affair* (1968 & 1999), *Ocean's Twelve* (2004), *The Pink Panther* (2006), and

The Louvre's Secret (2005) – merely a handful among many such adaptations.

In the shadowy intersection where priceless treasures meet persistent criminal threats, contemporary museum security has transformed into an impenetrable fusion of cutting-edge technology, unwavering vigilance, and military-grade precision. Gone are the days of simple display cases and passive alarms; today's cultural institutions rival maximum-security facilities in their protective measures.

Visible security forms just the first layer—biometric screening, access-controlled zones, and vault-like display cabinets protect sensitive areas. What visitors don't see is the sophisticated infrastructure beneath: vibration sensors embedded in walls, pressure-sensitive floors, and glass that can withstand ballistic impact. The moment any protection is breached, silent alarms summon immediate response.



Surveillance video from inside the Galerie d'Orsay art gallery in Boston shows a suspect in an alleged robbery

Round-the-clock surveillance operates through intelligent CCTV networks employing facial recognition, thermal imaging, and behavioural analysis. These feed live data to command centres where security experts monitor every movement. But technology alone isn't enough. Museum staff undergo rigorous training in threat response, while specialist art protection officers - versed in both security protocols and art history - maintain constant patrols.



This 3rd-century BC Greek gold chain necklace (Cyprus), featuring clasps shaped like horned lion's heads, went missing from the British Museum in 2023

Each artefact receives individual risk assessment, with conservation-grade enclosures maintaining precise temperature, humidity and light levels to prevent environmental damage.



Comprehensive documentation and custom insurance policies provide additional safeguards for these irreplaceable objects.

When prevention fails, international alliances spring into action. Museums collaborate with

Interpol's stolen art database, UNESCO's heritage protection teams, and specialised art crime investigation units. Public participation is actively encouraged through anonymous tip lines and awareness campaigns.

Emerging technologies like AI-powered pattern recognition and autonomous drone surveillance promise even stronger defences. This relentless, often invisible battle protects more than physical objects - it safeguards humanity's collective memory, ensuring future generations can learn from these cultural touchstones. In our modern museums, security has indeed become its own sophisticated discipline, as carefully crafted as the masterpieces it protects.

There is now also another ongoing trend of lending artefacts between museums. It began in the 19th century, though the concept of exchanging or loaning cultural objects can be traced back even earlier in history. The practice has evolved over time, reflecting changing attitudes towards cultural exchanges, accessibility, security, and preservation of art and historical artefacts. In the 17th and 18th centuries, it was common for private collectors, aristocrats, and royal courts to exchange or loan works of art to public collections or other individuals. European monarchies, such as the Habsburgs or the French royal family, were particularly active in lending royal collections for display in other courts or for exhibitions.

After the establishment of public museums, access to art and culture became increasingly important, and institutions began organising temporary exhibitions to share their collections with the public. This laid the groundwork for lending artefacts for specific cultural events. One of the catalysts for formalised museum loan systems was the rise of world exhibitions, beginning with the Great Exhibition of 1851 in London and the Exposition Universelle of 1889 in Paris. These events provided



The Potato Eaters, completed in 1885, is considered by many to be Van Gogh's first great work of art

an international stage for museums, governments, and private collectors to display their holdings, encouraging collaboration between national institutions and the loan of artefacts.

By the late 19th century, the practice had become more structured, with written agreements and protocols outlining the terms, conditions, and responsibilities of lenders and borrowers. Following the Second World War, cultural diplomacy gained prominence, with museums and governments using loans to foster international relations and promote cross-cultural understanding. Exhibitions of foreign art grew more frequent, serving as initiatives to advance peace and mutual appreciation between nations. Simultaneously, museums developed more sophisticated logistical frameworks, including specialised art transport, enhanced security measures, and refined insurance and loan contracts.

In April 1991, twenty of Vincent van Gogh's masterpieces were stolen during transit at Amsterdam's Schiphol Airport. The paintings - including *The Potato Eaters* and *Wheatfield with Crows* - were en route from the Van Gogh Museum to an exhibition in Italy. The theft was carried out by a group who intercepted the shipment, exploiting security vulnerabilities. Although the paintings were recovered within 24 hours (as the thieves struggled to sell such high-profile works and returned them anonymously), the incident underscored the ongoing risks to artworks during transport.

While the practice of lending artworks between museums is now well established and widespread, challenges persist - particularly concerning cultural property disputes and the repatriation of looted or contested pieces. Institutions have grown increasingly attentive to the ethical implications of loans, including questions of legal ownership and provenance.

Transporting priceless artefacts is more than a logistical challenge; it is a high-stakes ballet of precision, trust, and cutting-edge technology. Behind every successful loan lies a

meticulously coordinated operation: custom-built crates, climate-controlled vehicles, GPS tracking, and specialist couriers who handle each object as the irreplaceable treasure it often is. From airtight legal agreements and condition reports to shock-absorbent packaging and 24/7 security arrangements, no detail is overlooked. Every stage of the journey is monitored, sealed, documented, and scrutinised to ensure these cultural treasures arrive precisely as they departed - untouched by time or the rigours of transit.

In this modern age, as technology increasingly dominates our lives and appears poised to govern them entirely, the museum experience endures. Lengthy queues, sold-out exhibitions, and highly publicised art events attest to their lasting appeal. Museums are successfully adapting to meet the evolving needs and expectations of new generations, delivering innovative, interactive exhibitions that both educate and inspire.

While museum thefts are relatively rare today, each incident serves as a stark reminder of our shared cultural heritage's fragility. Every stolen artefact represents a loss not merely for an institution, but for humanity itself. Protecting these treasures demands constant vigilance, international collaboration, and sustained investment.

Ultimately, museums are more than repositories of the past - they are custodians of our collective history, guardians of cultural identity, and beacons of inspiration for generations to come.

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In May 2023, Interpol and Europol coordinated a major law enforcement operation targeting international art trafficking, resulting in 60 arrests and the recovery of more than 11,000 items

THE FRENCH A69 MOTORWAY INITIATIVE: ASPIRATION, DISPUTE, HALT, AND RESUMPTION

The A69 motorway is a significant infrastructure initiative in southern France, designed to enhance regional connectivity by connecting the current A68 motorway near Toulouse to the ring road around Castres. The project, designed as a 2x2-lane highway extending 62 kilometres from Castres to Verfeil, commenced in March 2023 with the objective of enhancing economic development in the Tarn department and decreasing travel durations between major urban centres.

On 27 February 2025, the Toulouse Administrative Court invalidated the project's environmental authorisation, determining that it failed to satisfy the criteria of a "imperative reason of overriding public interest" and that its environmental impact was unwarranted. This decision resulted in the prompt cessation of construction activities, with the exception of site security operations.

The A69 was engineered to resolve persistent transport challenges in the area. The existing route between Castres and Toulouse, primarily of national and departmental roads, is significantly congested and susceptible to delays. The proposed motorway intends to decrease travel duration from 75 minutes to around 45, alleviate congestion on local roads, and offer a safer, expedited option for both passenger and freight transportation.

Advocates contended that the road would enhance economic activity, draw investment to the Castres-Mazamet region, and facilitate accessibility for local towns and enterprises. The A69 was anticipated to provide several

construction jobs and foster long-term employment via enhanced regional integration.

Notwithstanding these economic justifications, the project



Protest against the construction of the A69

rapidly proved contentious. Environmentalists, farmers, and local residents expressed vehement resistance, condemning the project for its ecological ramifications and doubting its necessity.

A primary cause of dispute was the route, which traverses agricultural land, natural ecosystems, and ecologically significant locations. Critics asserted that the building would result in deforestation, habitat fragmentation, and elevated carbon emissions, compromising France's promises to environmental sustainability.

Activist organisations orchestrated demonstrations, sit-ins, and even occupied sections of the construction site to impede advancement. Tensions intensified as increasing public pressure



A section of the A69, following suspension of construction work

compelled some local councils to reevaluate their endorsement of the project.

In February 2025, after months of protests and increasing political scrutiny, the French government declared the suspension of building of the A69. Officials cited the necessity for additional environmental evaluations and public consultations as justifications for the suspension, however many perceived the action as a reaction to changing political dynamics in anticipation of next regional elections.



French Green Senator from Bas-Rhin Jacques Fernique

The suspension has rekindled discussions on the equilibrium between infrastructure development and environmental conservation in France. Proponents of the project contend that discontinuing it will squander millions of euros already invested and

hinder the region's economic advancement. Conversely, opponents perceive the suspension as a triumph for grassroots organising and an opportunity to investigate more sustainable transportation alternatives.

As of 24 May 2025, the legal circumstances of the A69 road project between Toulouse and Castres continue to be intricate and dynamic.

The 15th of May French Green Senator from Bas-Rhin Jacques Fernique said : "We are reviewing a bill that seeks to bypass two court rulings by giving political carte blanche to a destructive project: the motorway between Castres and Toulouse."

The French government has contested the 27 February 2025 verdict and sought a stay of execution to permit construction to proceed throughout the appeal process. The public rapporteur of the Toulouse Administrative Court of Appeal advocated for the approval of the stay, claiming that suspending the project could result in substantial economic and social repercussions.

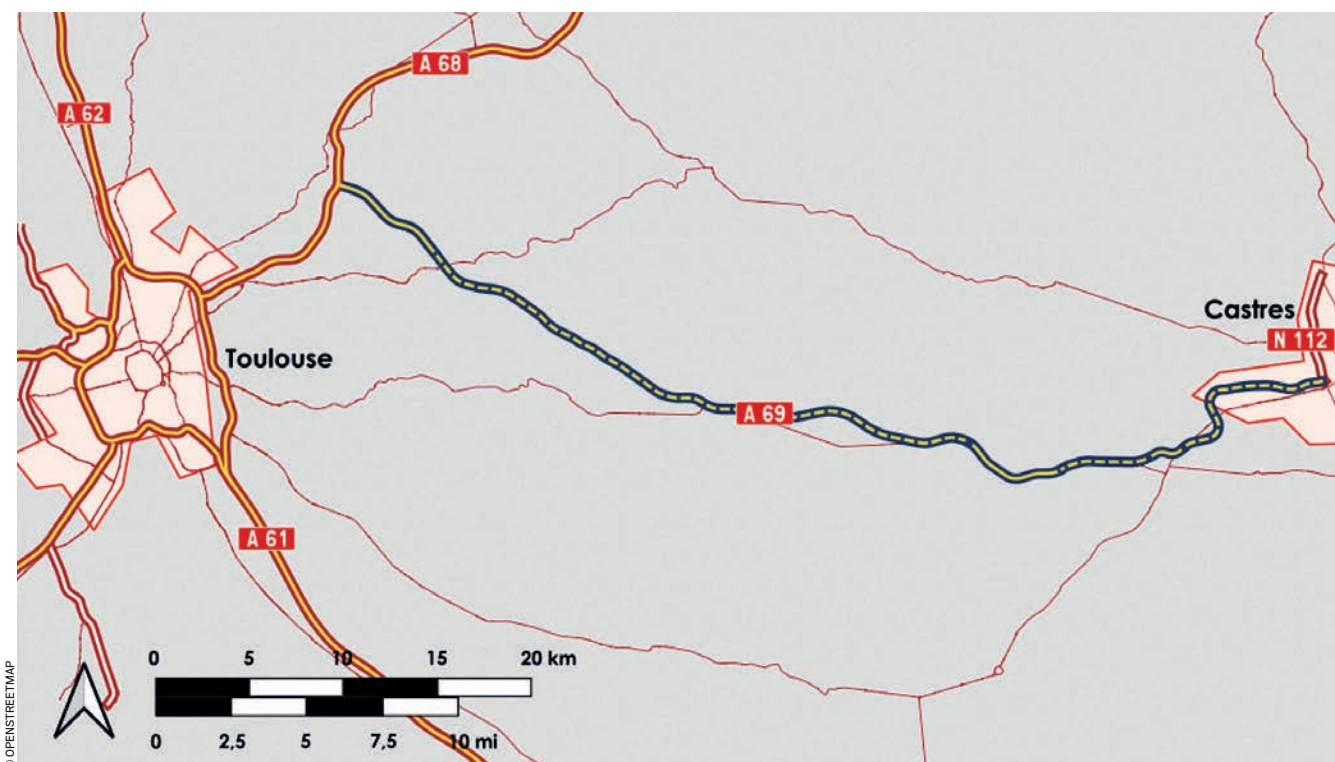
Simultaneously, on 15 May 2025, the Senate enacted legislation designating the A69 project as having "major public interest," intending to circumvent the judicial verdict and facilitate the resumption of development. This legislative action has faced condemnation from motorway opponents, who view it as a violation of the separation of powers.

On May 28, 2025, the Toulouse Administrative Court of Appeal suspended this annulment, allowing construction to resume pending a full appeal, which is expected within the next 12 months.

Environmental groups and local activists continue to oppose the project, planning demonstrations in early July 2025 to protest the resumption of construction.

Alain Hébrard, a member of the anti-A69 collective 'La Voie est Libre', announced that he was appealing to the Council of State, the highest court in the country, while regretting that this appeal would not suspend the resumption of work.

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NIST researchers have developed a database that contains the molecular “fingerprints” of different kinds of fabrics. Some of the clothing and textile samples for the database are shown here

NIST DATABASE CAN HELP INCREASE RECYCLING OF TEXTILES AND CLOTHING

- Researchers estimate that 85% of used clothes and other textiles end up in landfills and incinerators.

- To increase recycling and reduce waste, the industry needs better technology for automatically sorting used textiles and clothing.

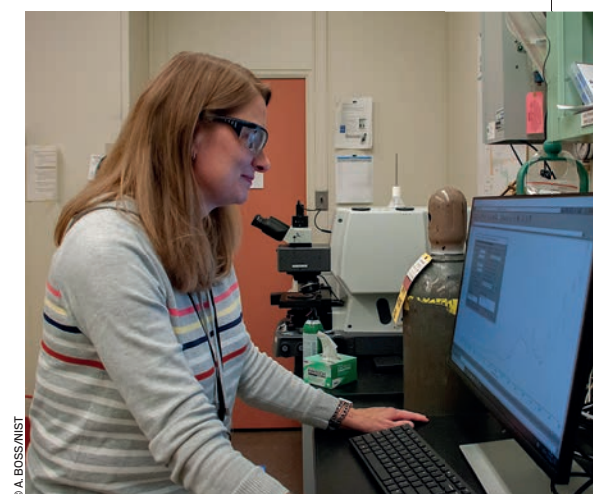
- NIST’s new “NIR-SORT” database contains the molecular “fingerprints” of different kinds of fabrics and will enable more rapid and efficient sorting of textiles and clothing.

Picture this: You have a bag of heavily used clothes that can no longer be donated taking up space in your closet, so you drop it off at your local recycling center. But what happens to that bag of clothes? You might assume that the clothes would get broken down and reused to make new products.

However, according to the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), in 2018 around 85% of used clothes and textiles headed to landfills and incinerators, wasting precious resources and polluting our environment. One reason is that recycling can be more expensive than landfilling, so companies have little incentive to recycle.

To help solve this problem, researchers at the National Institute of Standards and Technology (NIST) have developed a database that contains the molecular “fingerprints” of different kinds of textile fibers and that can enable more rapid, efficient sorting of fabrics at recycling centers.

“This reference data will help improve sorting algorithms and unlock the potential for high-throughput sorting, which requires less manual labor,” said Amanda Forster, a NIST materials research engineer. Forster leads the NIST project focused on keeping end-of-life textiles in the economy, a process called textile circularity. “That should reduce costs and increase efficiency, making textile recycling more economically viable.”



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Researcher Amanda Forster stands in her lab looking at near-infrared spectroscopy data obtained from clothing and textile samples

The database is free and available to download at the NIST Public Data Repository.

The problem of textile waste has been growing in recent years. One reason is fast fashion, a

business model that has companies churning out large volumes of inexpensive, trendy clothes that are often quickly discarded. New types of textiles, blended textiles, and incomplete or inaccurate labeling also pose significant challenges when it comes to sorting textiles at recycling centers.

At those centers, workers sort clothing using handheld devices that shine near-infrared light. Those devices measure how much of the light passes through or scatters off the fabric, producing a unique pattern — a sort of fingerprint that can identify the type of fibers in the clothing. This technique, called near-infrared (NIR) spectroscopy, can also be used in automated conveyor belt systems.



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A clothing sample is analyzed using an analytical lab technique called near-infrared spectroscopy. The method measures how much of the light passes through or scatters off the fabric, producing a unique pattern — a sort of fingerprint that can identify the types of fibers in clothing

However, current techniques still require a lot of manual labor.

In recent years, recycling equipment manufacturers have increasingly used machine learning and artificial intelligence to improve their sorting algorithms. To train these algorithms, they need high-quality reference data.

That’s where NIST’s database comes in. Called the Near-Infrared Spectra of Origin-defined and Real-world Textiles, or NIR-SORT, it contains 64 different fabric types along with the NIR fingerprints they produce. The database includes pure fiber types, such as cotton and polyester; blended fiber types, such as spandex blends; and real-world fabrics taken from thrift stores. Manufacturers of NIR scanner systems can use this database to train and test their sorting algorithms and improve the performance of their products.

“The difficulty comes in when fibers are similar, like cotton or hemp. That means that the near-infrared signal is similar. The same is true with a cotton and polyester blend. Is this a new fiber or a blend of two or more fibers?” said NIST research chemist Katarina Goodge, who led the development of the database. “AI can help make the decision-making process more accurate.”

Because NIST is the nation’s measurement institute, it has the equipment and expertise to fill this database with very high-quality spectra. That will hopefully mean fewer errors when identifying fabrics, and more textiles getting recycled.

This research stems from a key initiative of a report by NIST in which experts recommended the development of better technology for identifying and sorting textiles and clothing. These efforts are part of NIST’s Circular Economy Program, which develops measurement science and methods to support an economy where materials are designed to retain their value through repeated reuse, repair and recycling, with disposal as a last resort.

Misinformation on vaccines prevents you from making healthy decisions



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TIMELESS CHIC

STANDOUT FASHION AND BEAUTY TRENDS

HERE COME THE SUNNIES

Sunglasses are to summer like coats are to winter—it's simply not an option to go outside without them. This season, the fashion world's love affair with sunnies gets even hotter, with runway-inspired frames and bold new hues stealing the spotlight. Here are the 5 must-have pairs for Summer 2025.



1.



2.



3.



4.



5.



1. Butter yellow: The new neutral

Soft, sunny, and surprisingly chic, butter yellow lenses are the unexpected front-runner of the season. From wraparound shields to retro ovals, this mellow hue brings a warm, fashion-insider glow to any summer ensemble.

Oversized square black sunglasses with yellow lenses
(eoc-eyewear.com)

2. White frames: So chic

White sunglasses are your fast track to effortless impact. Whether oversized or tiny, round or angular, they instantly elevate any look.

Bold oval frame, balanced by tinted lenses
(houseofdagmar.com)

3. Rebel in retro: The cat-eye's bold return

Cat-eye sunnies blend feminine charm with a rebellious streak—mixing vintage glamour and modern attitude. Go sleek for subtle intrigue or oversized for drama; either way, all eyes will be on you.

Sleek cat-eye shape with a glamorous, Old Hollywood feel
(dior.com)

4. Aviators forever: Effortlessly iconic

Aviators remain eternal. With sleek metal frames and vintage-inspired lenses, they exude effortless sex appeal. Whether classic or reimagined, they're a staple that never quits.

The audacious aviator—reborn with a bold frame and a modern edge
(chimi-online.com)

5. Futuristic shields: the future is now

Imagine hyper-sleek, ultra-angular shield shades – smoked out or mirror-chrome. Perfect for sunbathing with style and attitude.


An oversized silhouette infused with '60s nostalgia
(prada.com)

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Smoking causes lung cancer



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