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## US 'to cease all future military exercises in Europe'

Nato countries could be forced to plan manoeuvres without US as Trump continues pivot away from bloc



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UK troops spearheaded Nato's Exercise Steadfast Dart in eastern Romania in January and February. Future exercises could be held without US troops Credit: Paul Grover for The Telegraph



**Connor Stringer**  
Deputy US Editor



Deputy CEO Editor

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The United States has told its allies that it does not plan to participate in military exercises in Europe, according to reports.

The move, the latest in Donald Trump's pivot away from the bloc, would see America pull out of exercises beyond those already scheduled for this year.

The withdrawal concerns exercises that are on the “drawing board”, according to Swedish newspaper Expressen.

It means that Nato countries will be forced to plan exercises without the participation of the US military, the largest in the alliance.

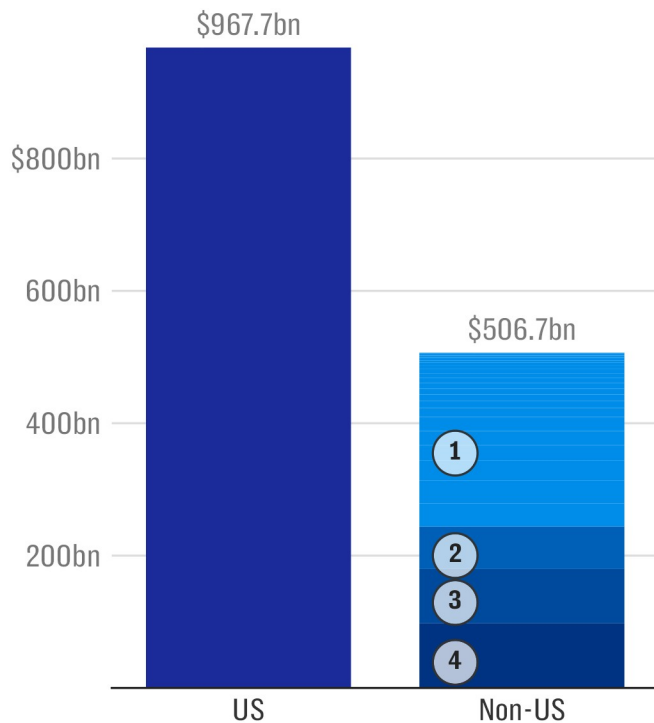
Mr Trump has repeatedly criticised Nato countries for not meeting the current goal of spending two per cent of GDP on defence, arguing that the disparity puts an unfair burden on the United States.



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## US military spending is nearly double that of all other NATO members combined

Estimated defence expenditure of NATO members in 2024, at current prices and exchange rates



- ① Others
- ② France
- ③ UK
- ④ Germany

Source: NATO

On Friday, he warned that the US may not defend Nato allies who do not meet the spending target as part of a major shake-up of the alliance.

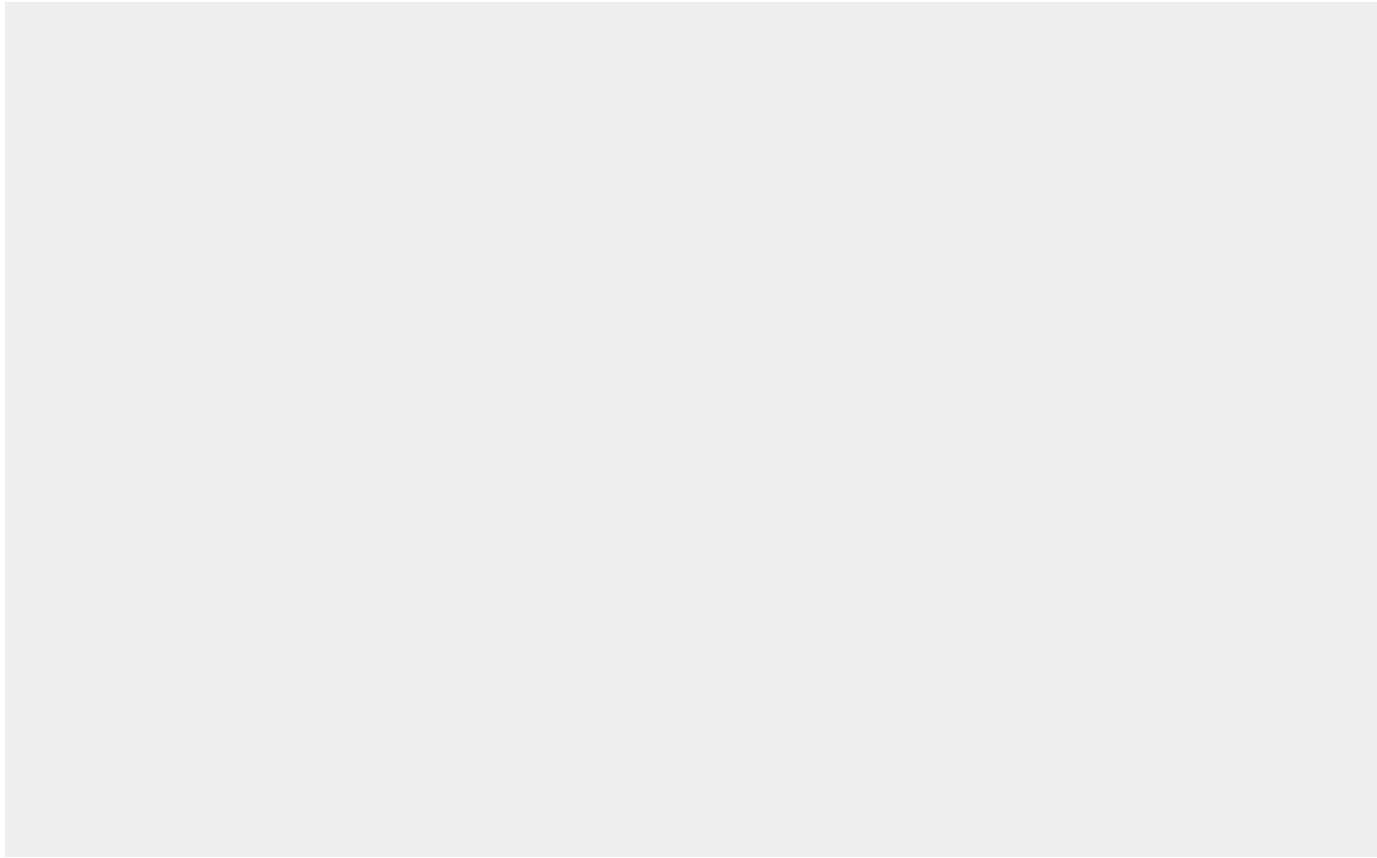
Mr Trump told reporters: “When I came to Nato, when I first had my first meeting, I noticed that people weren’t paying their bills at all, and I said I should wait till my second meeting.

“And I did. And I brought that up, and I said, ‘If you don’t pay your bills, we’re not going to participate. We’re not going to protect you.’

“And when I said that, as soon as they said that, it was amazing how the money came in, the money came in, and now they have money. But even now, it’s not enough. They should be paying more.”


It has also been reported that the Trump administration is redrawing Nato engagement in a way that favours member countries with higher defence spending.

The president is said to be considering prioritising military exercises with member countries that are spending the set percentage of GDP on their defence, officials told NBC.



British troops practising an assault during Operation Steadfast Dart in Romania in February Credit: Andrei Pungovschi/Getty Images

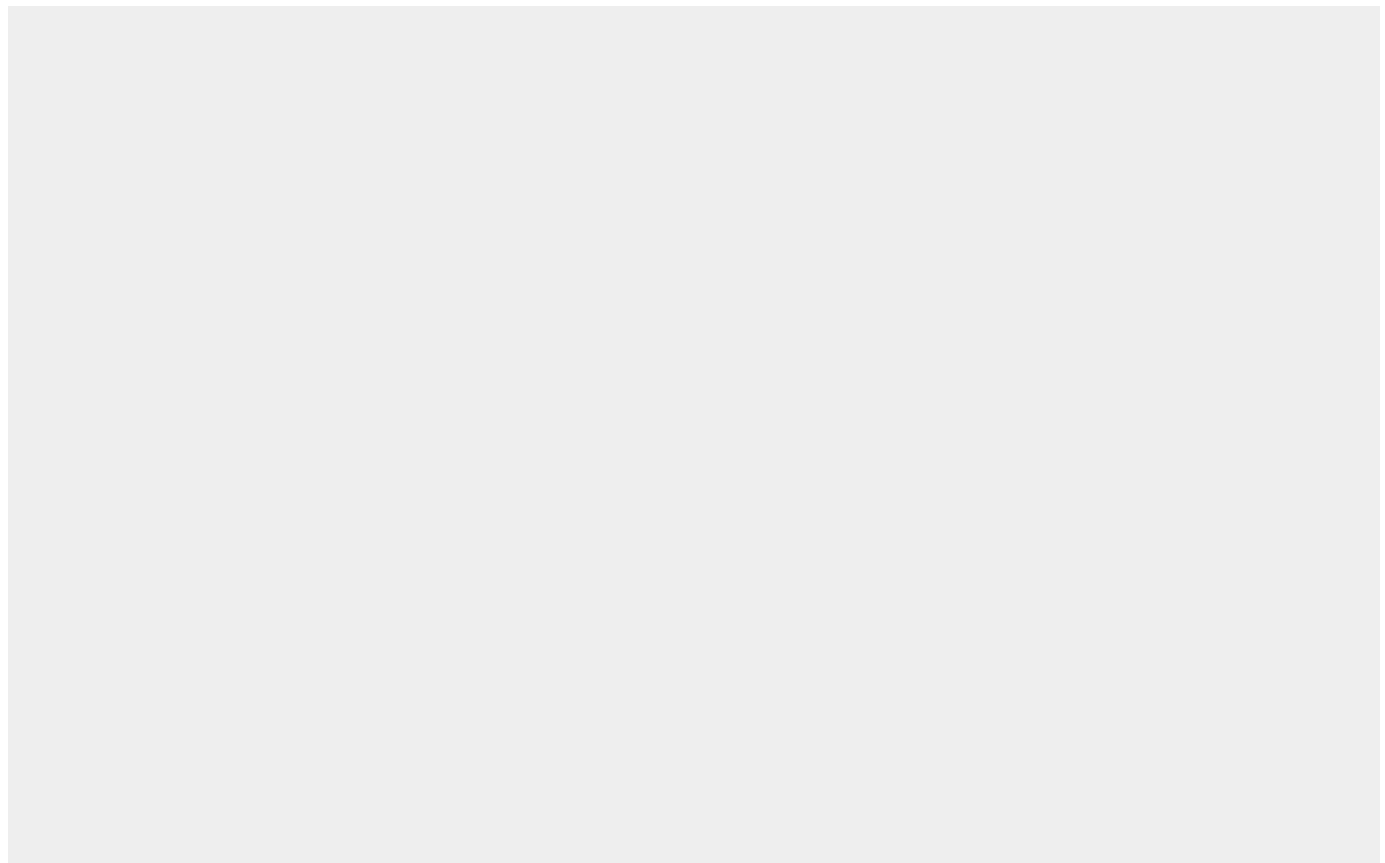
**“Nato has to pay more,” Mr Trump said in January after taking office. “It’s ridiculous because it affects them a lot more. We have an ocean in between.”**



The Telegraph reported on Friday that Mr Trump is also considering pulling US troops out of Germany and redeploying them to Eastern Europe.

He is understood to be weighing up withdrawing some 35,000 active personnel and moving them to Hungary.

Meanwhile, as high-level talks in Saudi Arabia are due to start next week, Volodymyr Zelensky has said that Ukraine is “fully committed to constructive dialogue” with the US.



An aerial view of a trench warfare exercise during Nato's Operation Steadfast Dart Credit: Paul Grover for The Telegraph

“Ukraine has been seeking peace from the very first second of this war. Realistic proposals are on the table,” the Ukrainian president said in a post to X.

Mr Zelensky said that he would visit Saudi Arabia for talks with the

kingdom's crown prince, but would not stay on for talks with representatives of the US government.

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Ukraine has been put under unparalleled pressure by the US, which this week suspended military aid and intelligence sharing.

Mr Zelensky is still yet to meet Mr Trump since their disastrous White House meeting sparked a geopolitical crisis.

Mr Trump doubled down on his criticism of Mr Zelensky on Friday, saying it may be “easier” to work with Moscow than Kyiv on efforts to end the three-year war.

The White House was contacted for comment.

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