

EU defence

Emmanuel Macron open to stationing French nuclear weapons in other European nations

French president in talks with Germany and Poland over whether warheads can protect them against Russia



French President Emmanuel Macron discusses nuclear deterrence on the TF1 channel on Tuesday © Ludovic Marin/EPA/Shutterstock

Leila Abboud in Paris and **Polina Ivanova** in Berlin

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French President Emmanuel Macron said he was “ready to open a discussion” with European allies about stationing France’s nuclear weapons on their soil, in an effort to beef up defences against Russia.

The comments made by Macron in an interview with the broadcaster TF1 on Tuesday come as he has been [holding talks](#) with Germany, Poland and other European countries to explore whether and how France’s nuclear deterrence could be extended on the continent.

Such a move is being considered in response to signs that US President Donald Trump wants to scale back the American military presence in Europe and force European countries to take more responsibility for their own security.

“I will define the framework [for talks about French nuclear weapons] in a very official way in the weeks and months to come, but we have already begun things with

the provisos I mentioned,” Macron said.

He laid out three conditions for extending France’s nuclear protection to European allies: Paris would not pay for the security of other countries; any deployment of France’s nuclear weapons could not deplete its ability to defend itself; and any decision to use the bombs would remain solely in the hands of the French president.

For decades, the US has been the ultimate guarantor of European security, in large part because it has stationed atomic weapons and fighter jets at army bases in Europe.

Under a nuclear-sharing agreement with Nato, the nuclear bombs are under US control, but they are designed to be carried and dropped by jets flown by Belgium, Germany, Greece, Italy, the Netherlands and Turkey.

European countries have been shocked at Trump’s apparent willingness to undermine the transatlantic alliance, while they fear that Russia will pose a long-term risk both to [Ukraine](#) and the rest of continental Europe.

Macron said “the moment we are living through [in Europe] is one of waking up geopolitically”, adding that Europe was first “built for peace” and to link up economies and trade, but “now it is about power”.

Few in Europe want the US to withdraw its nuclear guarantees, but the fear is such that the leaders of two staunchly Atlanticist countries — German Chancellor [Friedrich Merz](#) and Polish Prime Minister Donald Tusk — recently said that preparations for this scenario must begin.

France’s nuclear weapons arsenal is much smaller than that of the US, so it could not offer the same level of security to Europe.

For decades France has said the “vital interests” that determine the use of atomic weapons have a “European dimension”, but Paris has never defined this term, so as to keep the French president’s options open and any adversary guessing — the key to nuclear deterrence.

For Macron, talking to European allies about extending nuclear protection is a [delicate exercise](#) given how central the weapons are to France's own defences and its vision of its own sovereignty.

Although discussions are ongoing, they are not likely to result in a revision of France's nuclear doctrine, a French official said this month, but other changes could be made to signal Paris's resolve to adversaries.

European countries are keen to avoid anything that would undermine the defence relationship with the US.

When Merz visited Paris [last week](#), he and Macron said any discussions about broadening France's nuclear protection would aim to complement the existing Nato framework of security guarantees from the US.

Russia on Wednesday hit back at Macron's proposal, saying that it would not increase Europe's security.

"The proliferation of nuclear weapons on the European continent is not going to add to security, predictability and stability on the European continent," Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov told reporters.

He added that European nuclear powers, Russia and the US still had many more discussions ahead to work out a new strategic security architecture for Europe.

"Currently, the entire system of strategic stability and security is in a very sorry state, for obvious reasons," Peskov said.

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