How much does the US spend on NATO?

The US pays 14.9 % of NATO's common budget, roughly €770 million in 2026. Its own defense budget, close to $1 trillion, is a separate and far larger sum.

NATO's own budget

NATO as an organization has a small budget, called common funding. It pays for the headquarters, the integrated command structure, shared military infrastructure, the AWACS fleet and similar joint costs. NATO puts common funding at up to €5.3 billion for 2026. The three budgets it lists come to about €5.15 billion: a civil budget of €528 million, a military budget of €2.42 billion and up to €2.2 billion for the NATO Security Investment Programme, which builds shared infrastructure.

Allies pay according to a formula based on national income. For 2026 and 2027 the United States and Germany each pay 14.9039 %, followed by Britain at 10.3 % and France at 10.1 %. Applied to the three budgets, the American share works out at roughly €770 million, by our arithmetic.

That share has fallen. In 2018–2019 the US paid 22.1 % of the common budgets. In 2019 the allies agreed to bring it down to the same level as Germany from 2021, 16.3 % each; it was 15.9 % from 2024 and is 14.9 % now.

America's defense budget

The large number is national. NATO estimates US defense spending at $975.8 billion in 2025 and $1,032.8 billion in 2026, at current prices, or 3.17 % of GDP. The Pentagon's request for fiscal 2026 came to $1.01 trillion for national defense, including about $113 billion expected from a reconciliation bill. SIPRI, which uses a slightly different definition, put US military spending at $954 billion in 2025, 7.5 % less than a year earlier and 33 % of the world total.

This money pays for American forces everywhere: in the Pacific, the Middle East, at home and in Europe. NATO counts it in its statistics because the United States is an ally, but it is not paid to NATO, and the Pentagon's budget documents do not break it all down by region.

How the burden is shared

Measured by the allies' national spending, the United States carries most of the weight. In 2025 it accounted for about 60 % of all defense spending by NATO members, by NATO's own figures. US defense spending comes to about $2,438 per person, against $882 per person in the European allies and Canada, at 2021 prices.

The balance is shifting. In 2014 the US share was 69 %. For 2026 NATO projects 57 %, because European spending has grown much faster: the European allies and Canada raised their spending from 1.96 % of GDP in 2024 to 2.31 % in 2025. At The Hague in 2025 the allies agreed to reach 3.5 % for core defense by 2035; Spain secured flexibility on its own path. Country by country, the figures are in How much do European countries spend on defense? and the European totals in European defence in numbers.

What the US spends in Europe

The closest official line is the European Deterrence Initiative, which began in 2014 as the European Reassurance Initiative. For fiscal 2025 the Pentagon requested $2.9 billion, down from $3.6 billion requested a year earlier and $4.3 billion enacted in fiscal 2023. About 80,000 US service members are stationed in Europe; how that presence is changing is in How many troops does NATO have?

Two sums, one bill

The US pays less than 15 % of NATO's own budget, the same as Germany, and about 60 % of what all allies spend on defense, because it funds the world's largest military budget for global pur-

poses. Europe's share of the total is rising quickly. Whether the money buys a defense Europe could run without America depends on whether Europeans spend it together.

All questions →

FREQUENTLY ASKED

How much does the US pay into NATO's budget?
14.9 % of NATO's common funding in 2026 and 2027, the same share as Germany. NATO's three common budgets add up to about €5.15 billion in 2026, so the US share comes to roughly €770 million by our arithmetic. Shares are set by each ally's national income.

How much does the US spend on defense in total?
About $976 billion in 2025 by NATO's estimate, and $1,033 billion in 2026, at current prices. That is 3.17 % of US GDP. The money pays for American forces worldwide, not for NATO as such.

What share of NATO defense spending is American?
About 60 % in 2025: $976 billion of the allies' combined $1,630 billion, by NATO's own figures. The share is falling as Europe spends more: it was 69 % in 2014 and NATO projects 57 % for 2026.

How much does the US spend on Europe specifically?
No official figure covers it all. The clearest line was the European Deterrence Initiative: $2.9 billion requested for fiscal 2025, down from $3.6 billion a year earlier. About 80,000 US service members were stationed in Europe in May 2026, according to US European Command.

Did the US cut its NATO contribution?
Its share of the common budgets fell by agreement. In 2018–2019 the US paid 22.1 %; under a 2019 deal it fell to 16.3 % from 2021, level with Germany, then 14.9 % for 2026–2027. Its far larger defense budget has risen in cash terms every year since 2017 by NATO's count; SIPRI records a 7.5 % fall in 2025.

SOURCES

- NATO: Funding NATO (4/2026) – common funding about €4.6 billion in 2025 and up to €5.3 billion in 2026; civil budget €528.2 million, military budget €2.42 billion, NSIP ceiling €2.2 billion; cost shares 1 January 2026 to 31 December 2027: United States 14.9039 %, Germany 14.9039 %, United Kingdom 10.3277 %, France 10.1023 %
- NATO: Common-funded budgets 2018–2019, archived (12/2019) – US cost share 22.1387 %; NATO: Cost shares 2021–2024, archived (5/2020) – United States and Germany 16.3444 % each from 2021 after North Macedonia's accession (16.3572 % before); NATO: Cost shares from 7 March 2024 – 15.8813 % each
- NATO: Defence Investment of NATO Countries (2014–2026), Tables 2, 3 and 6 (7/2026) – current prices, US $653.9 billion of $943.3 billion (2014), $975.8 billion of $1,629.6 billion (2025e), $1,032.8 billion of $1,809.9 billion (2026e); US 3.17 % of GDP; per capita (2021 prices) US $2,438, Europe and Canada $882 (2025e)
- US Department of Defense (Comptroller): FY2025 European Deterrence Initiative budget justification (3/2024) – EDI, originally the European Reassurance Initiative (2014); FY2025 request $2,911.8 million; FY2024 request $3,630.4 million; FY2023 enacted $4,267.4 million
- US Department of Defense (Comptroller): Defense Budget Overview, FY2026 Budget Request (6/2025) – national defense request $1,011.9 billion, including $113.3 billion of reconciliation funding for DoD
- NATO: The Hague Summit Declaration (6/2025) – 5 % of GDP by 2035, of which at least 3.5 % for core defence; Letter of the NATO Secretary General to the Spanish Prime Minister (6/2025) – Spain's "flexibility to determine its own sovereign path"
- ABC News (AP): US to withdraw 5,000 troops from Germany (5/2026) – EUCOM: about 80,000 US service members in the European theater
- SIPRI: Trends in World Military Expenditure, 2025 (4/2026) – United States $954 billion, down 7.5 %, 33 % of world spending