



An aerial photograph of a local fishing boat in the Iraqi Hawizeh Marsh in Maysan province, southern Iraq, after water returned due to rainfall following a long period of drought. Hawizeh is a transboundary marsh shared by Iraq and Iran. The photo was taken on Sunday.

PHOTO: AFP

Global military spending surges on insecurity: report

AFP, Stockholm

Global military spending reached nearly \$2.9 trillion in 2025, marking an 11th consecutive year of growth, researchers said yesterday, as insecurity and rearmament fuelled defence budgets.

The three top spenders – the United States, China and Russia – spent a combined total of \$1.48 trillion, just over half of global expenditure.

Spending rose by 2.9 percent compared with 2024, despite a reduction by the US, the world's biggest spender, according to a report by the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI).

Researcher Lorenzo Scarazzato told AFP the decrease from the US was more than offset by increases in Europe and Asia, as the world marked "another year of wars and increased tensions".

Scarazzato said this was also reflected in the global "military burden" – the share of worldwide GDP devoted to military spending – which reached its highest level since 2009.

"Everything points to a world that feels less secure and is spending on its military to compensate for the global landscape," he said.

The US spent \$954 billion, 7.5 percent less than in 2024, largely because no new financial military aid to Ukraine was approved. By contrast, Washington pledged a total of \$127 billion to Kyiv over the previous three years.

But the decrease is expected to be short-lived as the US Congress has approved spending of over \$1 trillion for 2026, which could rise to \$1.5 trillion in 2027 if Donald Trump's budget proposal passes.

The main driver of the global increase was Europe – including Russia and Ukraine – where spending surged 14 percent to \$864 billion.

"That is driven by two major factors. One is the ongoing war in Ukraine, and the other is the decreased US engagement with Europe," Scarazzato said.

Germany, the fourth-largest spender, raised expenditure by 24 percent in 2025 to \$114 billion.

Spain also recorded a 50 percent jump to \$40.2 billion, pushing military spending above two percent of GDP for the first time since 1994.



The ongoing war in Ukraine saw both Russia and Ukraine increase their military spending, with each recording the highest share of government spending allocated to the military.

Russia's spending rose 5.9 percent to \$190 billion, equivalent to 7.5 percent of GDP.

Ukraine meanwhile boosted spending by 20 percent to \$84.1 billion – a staggering 40 percent of GDP.

Despite persistent tensions in the Middle East, expenditure in the region rose only marginally, by 0.1 percent, to \$218 billion.

While most countries in the region increased spending, Israel and Iran actually recorded declines.

In Iran, it fell 5.6 percent to \$7.4 billion, but this was mostly due to high annual inflation of 42 percent. In nominal terms, spending actually rose. Israel's 4.9 percent drop to \$48.3 billion reflected a reduced intensity in the Gaza war, the researchers explained, while noting Israeli spending was still 97 percent higher than in 2022.

In Asia and Oceania, spending reached \$681 billion, an 8.5 percent increase from 2024 – the region's largest annual increase since 2009.

Scarazzato said the "major player" in the region was China, which has been increasing spending every year for the past three decades, and spent an estimated \$336 billion in 2025.

Japan raised military expenditure by 9.7 percent, to \$62.2 billion in 2025, equivalent to 1.4 percent of GDP – its highest share since 1958 – while Taiwan increased its spending by 14 percent to \$18.2 billion.

British royals begin 4-day US visit

AFP, Washington

Britain's King Charles III began a state visit to the United States yesterday, as transatlantic tensions simmer over the Iran war, and despite a shooting two days earlier at a dinner attended by his host, President Donald Trump.

The four-day trip by Charles and Queen Camilla is intended to honour historic ties between the two countries as the US marks its 250th anniversary.

Charles will become the first British monarch to address Congress since the late queen Elizabeth II, in 1991, while the royal couple will have tea with Trump and Melania, and attend a state dinner.

The royals will visit New York on Wednesday, touring the 9/11 memorial, before departing Thursday for Bermuda for their first visit to a British overseas territory as monarch.

Charles's visit comes at the request of the UK government and President Donald Trump, according to the palace.

"He's a friend of mine for a long time, so he's coming, and we're going to have a great time, and he represents his nation like nobody else can do it," Trump told Fox News on Sunday.

'Pretty sick guy' Trump on White House press dinner attack suspect

REUTERS, Washington

US President Donald Trump said on Sunday that the suspect accused of trying to attack administration officials at a black-tie gala on Saturday night was a "pretty sick guy" who had been flagged to law enforcement by family members.

Trump said in TV interviews that the suspect, whom an official identified as 31-year-old Cole Tomas Allen, of Torrance, California, had posted what Trump described as an "anti-Christian" manifesto.

"He was a Christian, believer, and then he became an anti-Christian, and he had a lot of change," Trump told CBS' "60 Minutes" program. "He was probably a pretty sick guy."

In the manifesto, Allen calls himself the "Friendly Federal Assassin" and said he planned to attack Trump administration officials, prioritising them from highest-ranking to lowest, but excluding FBI Director Kash Patel, a law enforcement official told Reuters.

Allen cited Christian theology as he said he was trying to protect those harmed by the administration's policies.

"Turning the other cheek when 'someone else' is oppressed is not Christian behaviour; it is complicity in the oppressor's crimes," the manifesto read, according to the official.

The manifesto, which was sent to members of Allen's family shortly before the attack, mocked the "insane" lack of security at the Washington Hilton, where the White House Correspondents' Association dinner was held, the official added. Allen was arrested at the scene.

Officials have said the suspect fired a shotgun at a Secret Service agent at a security checkpoint in the Washington Hilton hotel before being tackled and arrested.

The suspect will be charged in federal court today with assault of a federal officer, discharging a firearm and attempting to kill a federal officer, Blanche said, adding he did not know if there was an Iran connection to the attack. Further federal indictments will be coming later, Blanche said.



Two ex-Israel PMs unite to challenge Netanyahu in polls

AFP, Jerusalem

Former Israeli prime minister Naftali Bennett and opposition leader Yair Lapid announced Sunday they will run on a joint list in this year's elections, in a move aimed at unseating incumbent Benjamin Netanyahu.

"I am pleased to announce that tonight, together with my friend Yair Lapid, I am taking the most Zionist and patriotic step we have ever taken for our country," Bennett said in a joint televised statement with Lapid.

"Tonight, we are uniting and founding the Beyahad (Together) party under my leadership, a party that will lead to a great victory and open a new era for our beautiful country."

During the televised statement, Lapid said: "Bennett is a right-wing politician, but an honest one, and there is trust between us."

Earlier on Sunday, Lapid, himself a former premier, had said he would join forces with Bennett.

"The move brings about the unification of the Repair Bloc, enabling all efforts to be focused on leading Israel toward the necessary repair," he wrote on X.

Bennett said that if elected, he would establish a national commission of inquiry into the failures leading up to the October 7, 2023 Hamas attack – something the current Netanyahu government has rejected.

Bennett and Lapid have been outspoken critics of Netanyahu's handling of the country's wars since that attack, with Lapid going so far as to label the recent two-week ceasefire agreed with Iran a "political disaster".

Opinion polls suggest Bennett is the candidate best placed to defeat Netanyahu in the October vote.



Smoke rises following an Israeli explosion in southern Lebanon near the border as seen from the Upper Galilee in northern Israel yesterday. Hezbollah leader Naim Qassem yesterday rejected Lebanon's planned direct negotiations with Israel, calling them a "grave sin" that will destabilise Lebanon.

PHOTO: AFP

ANTI-NARCOTICS OPS US says three killed in boat strike

AFP, Washington

The US military said Sunday that three men were killed when it struck a boat "engaged in narco-trafficking operations" in the Eastern Pacific ocean.

This latest strike – which follows dozens of similar attacks in recent months – brings the US campaign's death toll to at least 185, according to a tally compiled by AFP.

As with many previous attacks, the US military's Southern Command said on X that the boat hit was "operated by Designated Terrorist Organizations".

The US has not provided evidence that the vessels it has been striking since September are involved in drug trafficking. Legal experts and rights groups suggest the strikes could amount to extrajudicial killings because they have apparently targeted civilians who do not pose an immediate threat to US.