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Belgium's De Croo: Europe needs to boost its defense industry

*Де Кроо з Бельгії: Європі необхідно розвивати свою оборонну промисловість*

*Прем'єр-міністр Бельгії Александер де Кроо заявив, що Європа має створити сильнішу військову промисловість, щоб вкласти нові національні інвестиції у танки, літаки та ракети після вторгнення росії в Україну. Під час виступу на берлінській площі Жандарменмаркт про те, як Європі слід переорієнтуватися через війну росії в Україні, А. де Кроо сказав, що забезпечення енергетичної незалежності та перегляд свого підходу до розширення мають вирішальне значення, але країни ЄС також мають переконатися, що вони не спрямовують мільярди на нові військові інвестиції там. За його словами, це зробило б Європу «міцним військовим блоком» та сильною частиною НАТО поряд зі Сполученими Штатами.*

<https://www.politico.eu/article/belgium-alexander-de-croo-europe-defense-industry-investment-russia-war-ukraine/>

Europe should build a stronger arms industry to soak up fresh national investment in tanks, planes and missiles following Russia's invasion of Ukraine, Belgium's Prime Minister Alexander De Croo said Monday.

During a speech in Berlin's Gendarmenmarkt on how Europe should [refocus](#) because of the war, De Croo said securing [energy independence](#) and reconsidering its approach to enlargement were critical but that EU countries also need to make sure they don't funnel billions into new military investment abroad.

“We must build a stronger European defense industry, able to compete with other global players,” De Croo said. “If we increase our defense budgets and investments in military technology, let it be European technology. Developed in Europe, built in Europe. With European return on investment.”

Doing so would make Europe a “solid military bloc” and a strong part of NATO alongside the United States, he said. “We cannot make ourselves dependent on who would be the next occupant of the White House.”

Following Russia's invasion, Germany [announced](#) it would finally meet NATO's 2 percent of GDP military spending target, while Sweden and Finland

weigh plans to join the transatlantic defense alliance and other countries consider increases to their own arms investments.

In response, De Croo called for more coordination inside Europe's defense industry. "The U.S. has four types of warships; Europe has 30," he said. "The same for tanks and aircrafts. This fragmentation weakens our defense budgets, so we have to turn this around."

He also said military partnerships between both EU and NATO member countries should be expanded, citing the example of the close integration between Dutch and Belgian navies and air forces.

In recent years, the European Commission has pushed industrial alliances for strategically critical products such as [battery cells](#) and semiconductors, coordinating such initiatives to fill gaps in the supply chain while also leveraging billions in public finances. Such an approach could also be used for ramping up production of military hardware.

"This war in Ukraine has pushed us Europeans on a historic crossroad," De Croo added. "The choice in front of us is a simple one: Either we stick to old recipes and old structures and Europe will unravel, or we renew Europe, become stronger and more resilient as a bloc."