

NATO Boss Pushes For More Europe Defense Spending

By [Global Research](#)

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BRUSSELS - NATO Secretary General Anders Fogh Rasmussen on March 27 urged “paper tiger” Europe to ramp up investment in a costly missile defense umbrella.

The alliance chief’s remarks at a security conference in Brussels were largely aimed at the likes of EU heavyweights Germany, Italy and Spain, who fall substantially short of NATO military spending targets.

Britain and France, whose budgets are under ferocious pressure over the coming years having dug deep in a bid to insulate citizens from the worst economic slump since the 1930s, were also clearly in Rasmussen’s sights.

“The Lisbon treaty provides the EU with a stronger defense and security policy dimension,” he said. “But this will remain a paper tiger if it is not followed up by concrete military contributions when we need military contributions.

“Missile defense might be one key area whereby the Europeans can demonstrate such commitment ... and also demonstrate to the American public that the alliance is relevant,” he underlined.

Rasmussen’s call, which echoes that of predecessors in the post down the years at key points in the development of all significant defense projects, is intended to keep defense spending among top priorities for nations often beset by large public deficits and debts.

He said that a decision to “invest in a comprehensive missile defense system” would send a powerful “political signal.”

Rasmussen told his audience that a NATO summit in November represents a deadline for allies to fix plans to construct an integrated missile defense shield ideally stretching from Vancouver to Vladivostok.

Research has suggested that such a “security roof,” as Rasmussen called it, could cost upwards of \$20 billion (15 billion euros) to build.

The most recently-available NATO figures for member states’ defense spending, covering 2008, show Berlin, Rome and Madrid’s respective percentages coming in well below NATO’s stated goal of 2 percent of national output or GDP.

Germany, Italy and Spain are each on 1.3 percent.

Britain and France are both above the line, on 2.2 percent and 2.3 percent respectively, but Britain has the highest public deficit in Europe, equal to Greece at 12.7 percent of output, and France's military spending is seen as inflated by a heavy pensions element.

Greece was one of NATO's highest spenders proportionately in 2008, with 2.8 percent of output going on defence, but Athens has been forced by Brussels into radical spending cuts right across the board.

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