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Russia To Increase Troop Size To 1.55 Million

President Vladimir Putin [signed](#) an executive order on 29 September that would raise the strength of the Russian military by 15,500 troops, bringing the total number of active-duty servicemen to 1.55 million. Meanwhile, Russia plans to [spend](#) US\$ 202.58 billion on defense in 2027, around 27 per cent more than originally budgeted and the highest figure since the start of the war in Ukraine.

Russian-German Foreign Ministers Met For First Time Since Ukraine War

Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov met his German counterpart Johann Wadepful on the sidelines of the UN General Assembly on 26 September, their countries' first talks at foreign minister level since 2022. Russia's Foreign Ministry [said](#) the German side had requested the talks and that the ministers discussed bilateral relations and the war in Ukraine. Meanwhile, Russian President Vladimir Putin's special envoy Kirill Dmitriev held [talks](#) with US officials in Washington DC on 29 September on ending the Ukraine war, including possible U.S.-Russia energy initiatives in the postwar period.

Russia Conducted Parliamentary Elections

Russia's ruling party, United Russia, [won](#) a record number of seats in the lower-house State Duma. United Russia received 349 seats in the 450-seat State Duma, beating its previous record of 343 seats set in 2016. Opposition parties won the remaining seats, led by the Communist Party with 37, the Liberal Democratic Party with 23, New People with 19 and A Just Russia with 17.

Armenia Recalibrated Security Partnerships In South Caucasus

Armenia pursued defence engagements with a [diverse](#) set of partners in September, including France, Germany, United States and China. Armenian officials discussed military training, professional military education and broader defence cooperation with Washington and Berlin, while Defence Minister Suren Papikyan held talks with China's Defence Minister during the Xiangshan Forum. Meanwhile, Azerbaijan participated in defence engagements with China and organised a trilateral "Power of Unity-2026" exercise with Türkiye and Uzbekistan involving land, air, maritime and unmanned assets.

Kyrgyzstan Participated In CSTO Military Exercises

Kyrgyzstan [deployed](#) a military contingent to Russia for the CSTO's Interaction-2026, Search-2026 and Echelon-2026 exercises, alongside Russian, Kazakh, Belarusian and Tajik forces. The drills involved around 2,000 personnel and 350 weapons and vehicles, with extensive use of UAVs, robotic systems, reconnaissance, electronic warfare and air-defence capabilities.

Tajikistan Expanded Security Engagement With UK

Tajikistan and the UK discussed [strengthening](#) cooperation on counterterrorism, counter-extremism, drug trafficking, cybercrime and transnational crime during meetings between UK Defence Minister Lord Vernon Coaker and senior Tajik officials in Dushanbe. The engagement reflects Tajikistan's efforts to strengthen external security partnerships in response to

threats along its Afghanistan border, while also bringing a European actor more directly into Central Asian security cooperation.

Uzbekistan Established Diplomatic Ties With Vanuatu

On 22 September, Uzbekistan and Vanuatu established diplomatic relations in New York through a Joint Communiqué. The document was signed by Uzbekistan's Permanent Representative to the UN, Ulugbek Lapasov and Vanuatu's Head of the Mission to the UN, Odo Tevi. During the meeting, both sides emphasised the importance of strengthening close cooperation between the two countries within international organisations. The agreement expands Uzbekistan's engagement with the Pacific region.

India-Belgium Strengthened Defence-Industrial Cooperation

India and Belgium strengthened bilateral defence [cooperation](#) with the signing of a Letter of Intent (LoI) establishing a framework for regular exchanges, staff talks, education and training, research cooperation and defence-industrial partnerships. During Belgian Defence and Foreign Trade Minister Theo Francken's visit to New Delhi, the two sides also signed multiple MoUs and contracts aimed at leveraging Belgian defence technology alongside India's manufacturing capabilities and scale.

Denmark Expanded Arctic Military Presence

Denmark has [deployed](#) military conscripts to Greenland as it seeks to strengthen its presence in the increasingly contested Arctic region. The move comes amid heightened geopolitical competition involving the US,

Russia and China, as well as renewed scrutiny of Greenland following repeated US expressions of interest in acquiring the territory. The conscripts are participating in Arctic training exercises designed to improve cold-weather operational capabilities and form part of Denmark's broader effort to reinforce Arctic defence after years of limited investment.

Germany-US Defence-Industrial Ties Gained Momentum

Germany and the United States have [signed](#) a Letter of Intent aimed at expanding cooperation between their defence industries amid growing European demand for military equipment. This includes Germany's planned acquisition of Tomahawk cruise missiles, reflecting Berlin's efforts to develop long-range strike capabilities while simultaneously expanding its domestic defence-industrial base. German Defence Minister Boris Pistorius described the cooperation as a means of increasing capacity on both sides rather than creating greater dependence on Washington.

France And Canada Deepened Defence And Space Cooperation

French President Emmanuel Macron and Canadian Prime Minister Mark Carney have agreed to expand bilateral cooperation in defence, aerospace and space by developing and sharing common infrastructure such as space-launch systems and ground-based reception and control facilities. The two leaders also discussed European and transatlantic security, Arctic and Ukraine, while emphasising greater cooperation between Canada, France and the European Union. The initiative reflects the growing [convergence](#) between European Union's

emphasis on strengthening its strategic autonomy and Canada's efforts to diversify its strategic partnerships.

Scotland, Wales And Northern Ireland Leaders Signed MoU

On 14 September, the First Ministers of Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland met in Cardiff and signed a [memorandum of understanding](#) (MoU) focused on constitutional change and cooperation. Scotland's First Minister John Swinney and Northern Ireland's First Minister Michelle O'Neill called for independence referendums, while Wales' First Minister Rhun ap Iorwerth did not set a timetable for a vote. The three First Ministers took part in the initiative in their political rather than official capacities. The agreement called on the UK Government to prepare for possible constitutional change and outlined cooperation in [economic and energy](#) issues. The MoU does not itself alter the constitutional status of Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland.

UK Weighed Future EU Ties

On 29 September, UK Prime Minister Andy Burnham [said](#) he would outline different options for Britain's long-term relationship with the European Union in connection with a UK-EU summit expected later this year. He also said Brexit has created "[more harm than good](#)". Burnham has previously supported closer ties with the EU. The announcement brings the future trajectory of UK-EU ties back into political discussion.

Hungary Stalled Ukraine's EU Accession Bid

On 29 September, Hungary withheld approval for the screening results required for

Ukraine to advance in its European Union accession negotiations. The issue pertains to Cluster 2 on the EU Internal Market and Cluster 3 on Competitiveness and Inclusive Growth. The Council's Working Party on Enlargement and Countries Negotiating Accession to the EU ([COELA](#)) failed to reach an agreement after Hungary maintained its opposition. Budapest has conditioned additional advancements in Ukraine's membership process on assurances for the rights of the Hungarian minority in Ukraine.

Estonia Attributed Tallinn Arson To Russia

On 29 September, Estonian authorities attributed an [arson](#) attack at a building used by the defence company Milrem Robotics in Tallinn to Russian special services. Milrem Robotics produces unmanned ground vehicles used in Ukraine. The Estonian Foreign Ministry summoned Russia's chargé d'affaires after the attribution, while [NATO](#) and European officials expressed their support for Estonia. Russia rejected the allegation, with Kremlin spokesperson Dmitry Peskov describing the claims as [baseless](#).

Austria-Poland Strengthened Collaboration

On 17 September, Austrian Chancellor Christian Stocker met Polish Prime Minister Donald Tusk in [Warsaw](#). Discussions covered migration, European security and economic cooperation. The two governments agreed to hold a bilateral economic conference every two years. Additionally, Austria also announced an investment of approximately €1 billion for the expansion of the Nordbahn, which is expected to reduce the long-term train travel time between Vienna and Warsaw from eight to four hours.