

France, Germany Did Not Stop Military Trade with Russia Until Recently - Media

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Global Research, April 26, 2022

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Region: [Europe](#), [Russia and FSU](#)

Theme: [Intelligence](#)

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According to a recent survey of data on trade in military material between EU and Russian points to the existence of a profitable market, with ample flow of capital and goods. Russia and Western Europe are historically partners with mutually compatible commercial interests, however, given the current context of conflict in Ukraine, the mere existence of the partnership in the past generates scandal.

More than ten EU member states have operated military trade relations with Russia in recent years, totaling more than 350 million euros in transactions, The Telegraph reported. Among these countries, France and Germany stand out significantly, being responsible for more than 78% of bilateral military trade. Missiles, rockets, guns, and bombs are among the various equipment exported by European countries to Russia – much of which is apparently being used by Moscow’s forces in the current special military operation in Ukraine.

What has caused great discomfort in the Western media is the fact that much of this trade was operated “bypassing” a series of trade restrictions imposed by an active collective agreement to embargo Russia, signed in 2014 as a retaliation for the Russian intervention in Crimea. Basically, countries interested in trading military material with Russia used contracts prior to the embargo agreement to justify the continuity of relations, increasing trade and generating profits for the European military industry in the last eight years.

Indeed, the data on the military partnership comes at a delicate moment in relations between Russia and the West. Media agencies have severely criticized any position of Western governments that is not in absolute alignment with the policy of total boycott against Russia. Taking notes on the exports of weapons to Moscow, in this sense, sounds like a real scandal, resulting in denunciations and alarmism about an alleged “European connivence” with Russia’s actions in Ukraine.

Commenting on the case, Romanian MEP Cristian Terhes, responsible for the

abovementioned data collection research on military trade, said:

“While Ukraine is desperately crying out for weapons to defend itself from Putin’s invasion, Germany and France are silent, but were happy enough to quietly and disgracefully sell their wares to Moscow”.

The situation is particularly serious when we consider the German case. Previously, European newspapers were focused on criticizing Berlin for continuing its billion-dollar partnership with Russian energy companies, despite the current sanctions. Now, everything tends to get worse in mainstream media’s opinion about the German government, as for their respective experts all that matters is that Moscow receives sanctions and economic blockades in every way possible.

As a result, pressure is also increasing for Germany to send military and financial aid to Ukraine. Trying to maintain stable its energy relations with Russia and to avoid an escalation of the conflict, the German government has remained silent so far when questioned about German ability to send heavy weapons to Kiev. Now, with the data on German military trade with Russia being exposed, this pressure to “help Ukraine” will be intensified.

Scholz has already commented on the reasons why he has avoided allowing weapons to be sent to Ukraine. For him, this level of involvement on the part of NATO countries tends to escalate tensions even further, harming European security. For example, these were some of his words about the case during a recent interview:

“That’s why it is all the more important that we consider each step very carefully and coordinate closely with one another (...) To avoid an escalation towards NATO is a top priority for me (...) That’s why I don’t focus on polls or let myself be irritated by shrill calls. The consequences of an error would be dramatic”.

What is curious about all this is the sensationalist way in which the western media opines about international trade. There is nothing ideological about commercial relationships, they are just ties aimed at profits and the supply of products. By selling weapons to Russia, European nations are not contradicting their condemnation of Moscow’s actions in Ukraine, they are just stating that they have commercial and strategic interests in maintaining ties with the Russians despite not agreeing with the Kremlin’s decision to launch a military operation on Ukrainian soil.

France and Germany – and the other nations that maintain small military deals with Moscow – only prove that, despite the propagandistic idealism spread by the pro-NATO media, nations are guided by realistic politicians and advisers, who take state interests more seriously than unrealistic issues, such as the idea of “canceling Russia”.

Military trade with Europe represents a small fraction of the Russian arsenal. If pressure from NATO – mainly from the US and UK – for Europe to suspend military trade ties is carried forward, the only harmed party will be Europe itself, which will lose a significant source of business, without any effect being seen in the special operation.

Finally, it is necessary to mention that the act of “bypassing” – not violating – collective embargo agreements is a common practice in the global scenario and that it does not represent any illegality according to international law. If there were ties between Europeans and Russians before 2014, the subsequent embargo cannot dissolve them as there is an

international principle of justice that states that law does not retroact – it only legislates from the moment it was created. There is no media alarmism or pressure from NATO able to change the evident legality of trade between Europe and Russia.

It would be better to respect free decisions of each state and abdicate outdated measures of economic embargo in the face of the European interest in maintaining mutually benefitted trade ties.

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