U.S. Foreign Military Sales

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Topic and Motivation

- Foreign Military Sales (FMS): eligible foreign entities buy U.S. defense equipment w/ their own funds or U.S. security assistance funding (DSCA)
- U.S. FMS indicates strength of U.S. relationships with allies/partners
  - U.S. politics/foreign policy
  - Recent rhetorical shifts about foreign aid + allies/partners
  - Comparable to observed FMS levels

Research question: How have U.S. foreign military sales across regions changed across presidential administrations and changes in international politics between January 2021 and September 2026?

Hypotheses:

1. US FMS increased Jan 2021 → Jan 2025
2. FMS to Ukraine/Europe increased after Russian invasion of Ukraine Feb 2022
3. FMS decreased Jan 2025 → Sep 2026

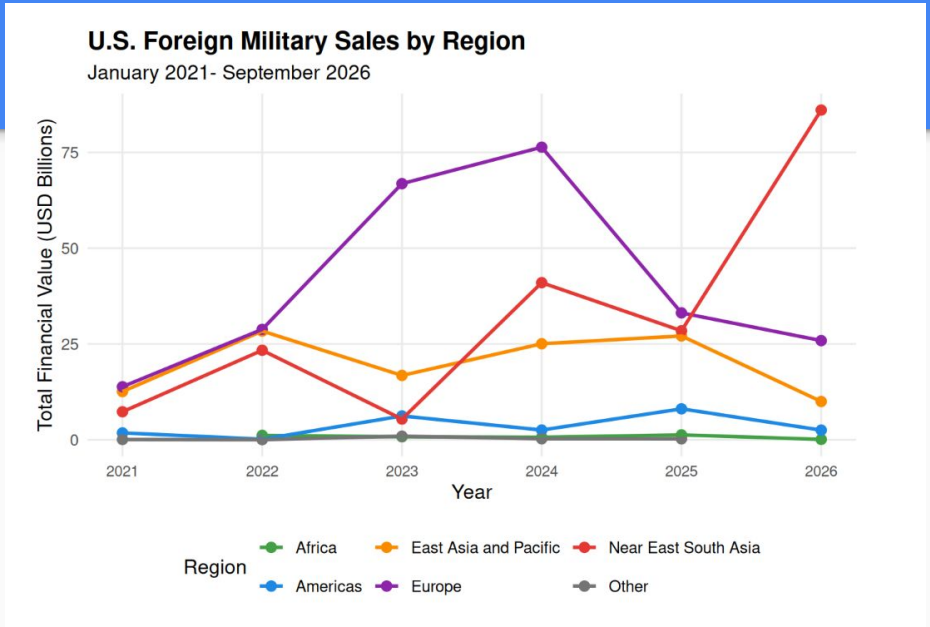
Data

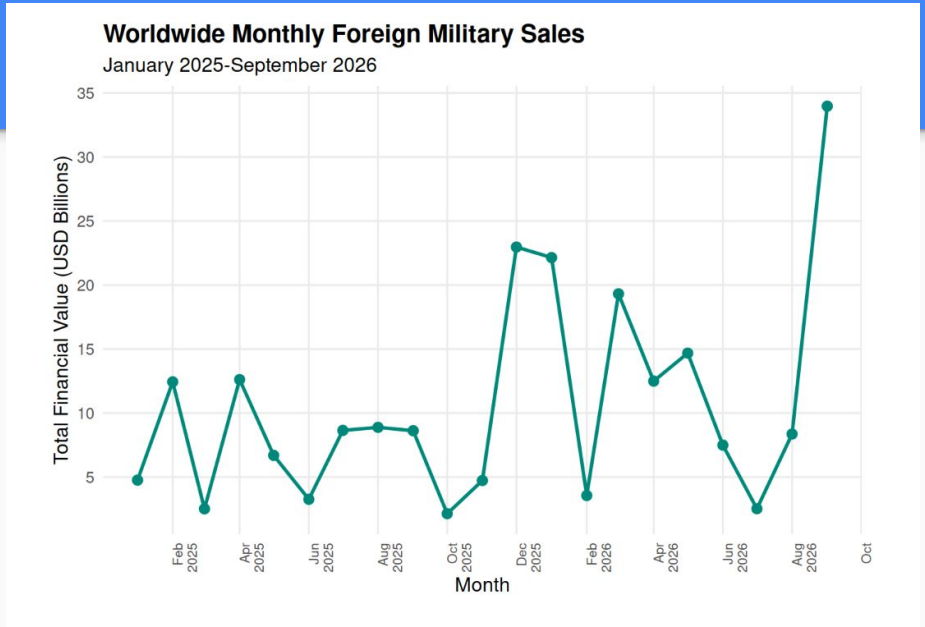
Dataset 1 (Aiden): bruegel, DoD data on U.S. FMS, variables of interest

Dataset 2 (Jason): World Bank, Military expenditure indicators

Dataset 3 (Jason): Our World in Data - Deaths in armed conflicts by country

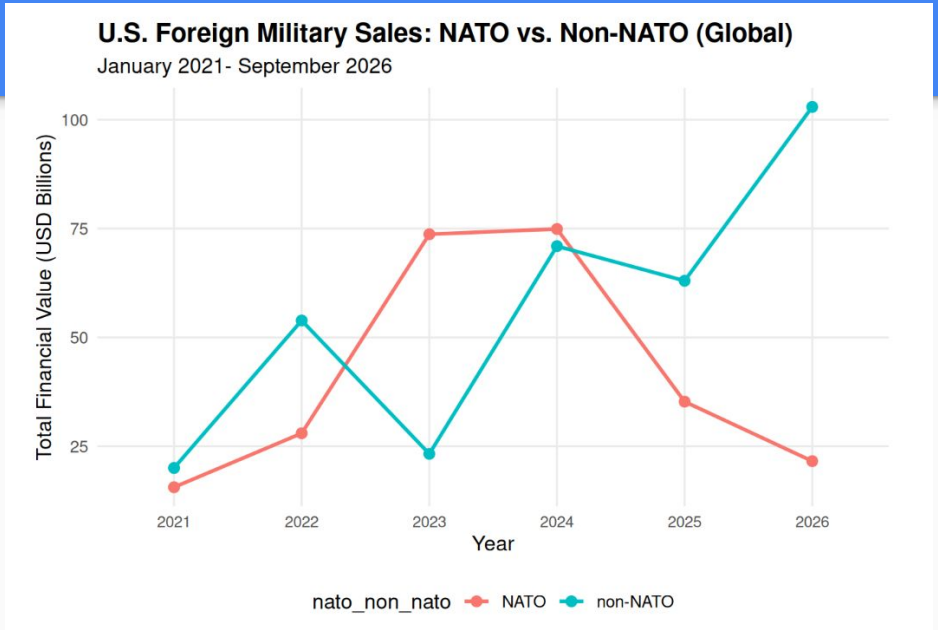
Highlights from EDA

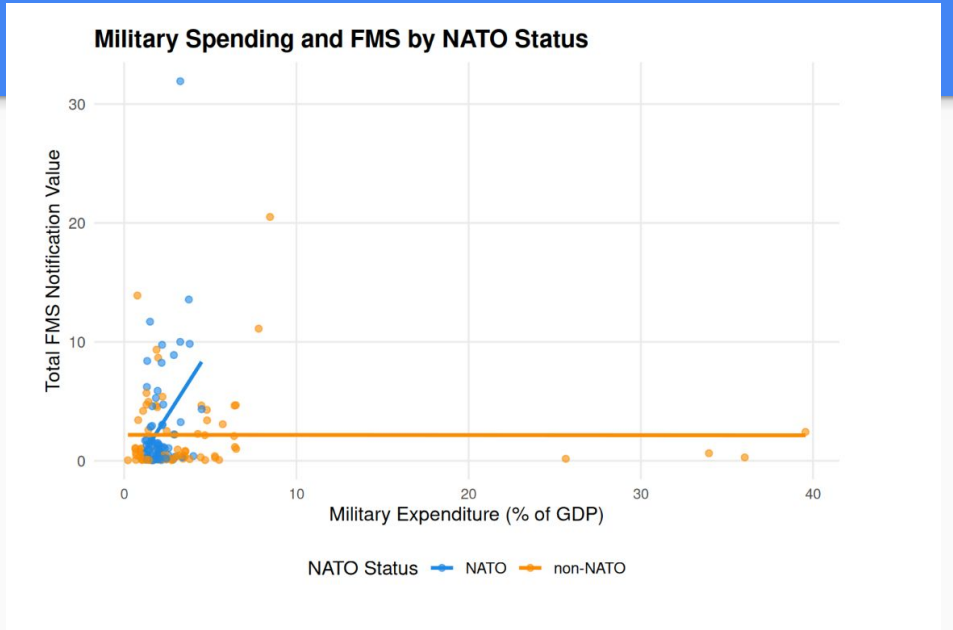




- Europe increased significantly from 2022-2024, while Europe and Near East South Asia declined in 2025.
- Near East South Asia rebounded sharply between 2025 and 2026, overtaking Europe.
- Global FMS fell in early 2025 before surging in December 2025 and August 2026.

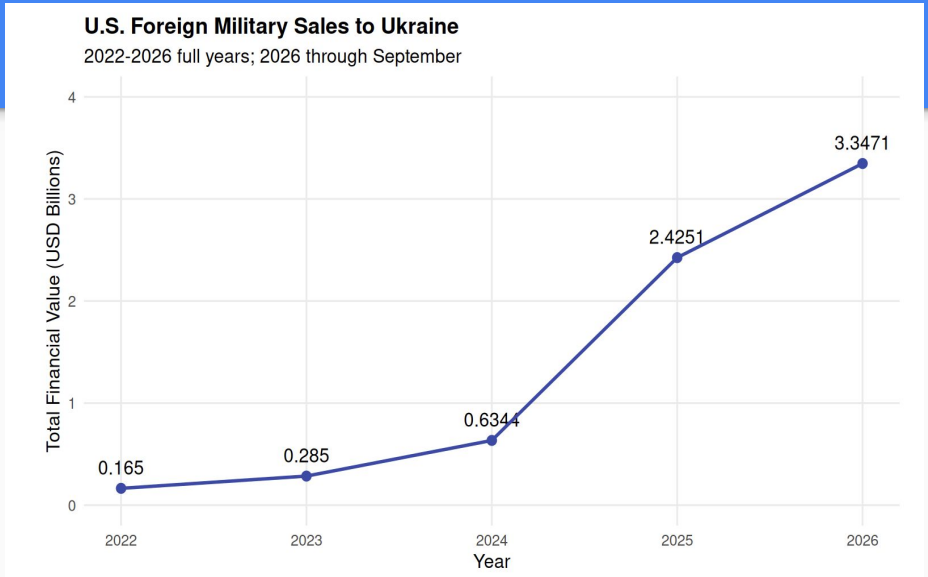
Highlights from EDA

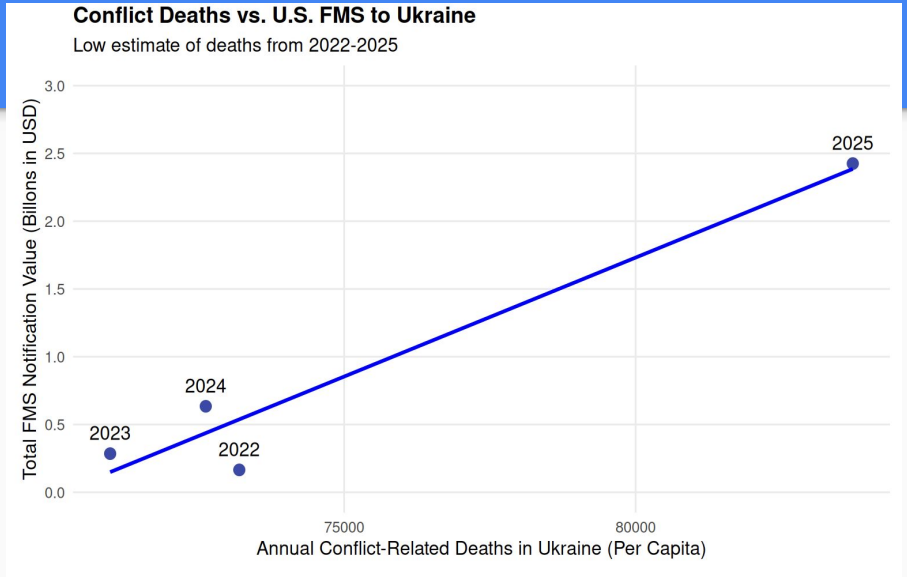




NATO notifications declined in 2025; military spending showed a weak positive correlation with FMS for NATO countries ($r = 0.347$), but almost none for non-NATO countries ($r \approx 0$).

Highlights from EDA





KEY TAKEAWAY: $165M in 2022 → $3.35B by Sep 2026
r = 0.970 across just 4 years.

Conclusions

- FMS notifications increased substantially in Europe after 2022, but the regional distribution shifted toward Near East South Asia in 2026.
- NATO notifications declined in 2025, potentially reflecting changing defense priorities and geopolitical relationships.
- FMS notifications to Ukraine continued increasing despite changes in U.S. political rhetoric.

Limitations

- Our data only cover January–September 2026, preventing full-year comparisons.
- Correlation does not establish causation, and FMS notifications do not capture all U.S. military assistance.

Sources

Bruegel - US Foreign Military Sales Dataset:

https://www.bruegel.org/dataset/us-foreign-military-sales

World Bank - Military expenditure indicators:

https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/MS.MIL.XPND.GD.ZS

Our World in Data - Deaths in armed conflicts by country

https://ourworldindata.org/grapher/deaths-in-armed-conflicts-by-country