



Automobiles and Defense: Everyone is Moving Towards a Strategic Shift Except Stellantis

Published on 21/06/2026

In the European industrial landscape of 2026, an unprecedented trend is consolidating: car manufacturers, driven by a structural crisis in the demand for electric vehicles and the need to optimize their production capacities, are looking with increasing interest at the defense sector. However, not all companies are moving in the same direction.

The European "Pivot": Reindustrialization for Security

In recent months, several giants in the sector (including Mercedes-Benz, Renault, and Daimler Truck) have announced strategic partnerships with defense companies. The goal is clear: to reuse plants, engineering skills, and supply chains to meet the growing demand for military vehicles, drones, and defense systems.

Industry experts indicate that the transformation is technically complex but logical: many of the technologies used in modern automotive production — from robotic assembly to onboard software systems — are easily convertible for the production of tactical vehicles or defense platforms.



Automobiles and Defense: Everyone is Moving Towards a Strategic Shift Except Stellantis

Stellantis' Position: A Cautious Approach

Unlike some competitors who have actively embraced the conversion to war production,

Stellantis has maintained a distinctly cautious stance.

The President of Stellantis, John Elkann, has repeatedly expressed skeptical positions regarding the integration between the automotive and defense industries in Europe. Despite recurring speculations in the United States and Europe about possible involvement of the group's plants in military contracts, the official strategy of the giant remains focused on consolidating the core automotive business.

- **Focus on Mobility:** Stellantis' priority, outlined in the *FaSTLANe 2030* plan, aims to recover the saturation of European plants (aiming to exceed 80% by the end of the decade) through new industrial partnerships, Maserati models, and affordable electric vehicles, not through conversion into armament factories.
- **Technological Innovation:** Instead of turning to the military sector, the group is enhancing technological collaborations in software and AI (such as the strategic one with Microsoft), to strengthen the cybersecurity of connected vehicles and improve the efficiency

of civil production.



Automobiles and Defense: Everyone is Moving Towards a Strategic Shift Except Stellantis

The Challenges of an Industrial Conversion

For manufacturers who decide to "pivot" towards defense, the challenge is not only political but operational. The transition requires:

1. **Standardization:** Adapting production lines designed for massive volumes to more specific production cycles certified for military standards.
2. **Economic Sustainability:** Although the defense sector offers long-term government contracts, automotive revenues remain on a different order of magnitude (European automotive turnover is enormously higher than that of defense).
3. **Governance:** The organizational complexity of managing dual production (civil and military) can create friction in supply chains.

Conclusions

While the European automotive industry stands at a crossroads, the case of Stellantis shows that there are two schools of thought. On one hand, those who see defense as a resource to mitigate the decline in civilian demand; on the other, those who prefer to focus on specialization and the efficiency of mass production, betting on a recovery of the global automotive market.

For now, Stellantis' line is clear: the future of the automobile is not played out on battlefields, but in European industrial policies, energy, and the ability to innovate the quintessential consumer product of the 21st century.