
Trump plans to cut US military presence in Germany – reports

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US President Donald Trump is planning to reduce the number of American troops stationed in Germany, several media outlets reported, citing an unnamed official.

The exact size of the force that could be moved out is still unknown, but reports at Reuters and the Wall Street Journal say that preliminary plans involve up to 9,500 soldiers – more than one fourth of the 34,500-strong contingent – that could be redeployed by September.

Some media, like Germany's Deutsche Welle, promptly linked the withdrawal to Washington's dissatisfaction with Berlin over its continuous failure to contribute two percent of its GDP to the NATO budget, as is required under alliance guidelines. Last August, the former US ambassador to Germany, Richard Grenell, sparred with German MPs after complaining that it was "insulting" for Berlin to expect US taxpayers to "keep paying for over 50,000 Americans" stationed in the country.

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The officials told the Journal that the proposed reduction is unrelated to the spat over the NATO budget, however, and is rather a result of months of planning by America's top military officer, General Mark Milley, chairman of the joint chiefs of staff. The order for the drawdown ultimately came from Trump's national security adviser, Robert O'Brien.

National Security Council spokesman John Ulyot did not confirm the news and said he is unaware of any such decision, telling The Hill: "The United States remains committed to working with our strong ally Germany to ensure our mutual defense, as well as on many other important issues."

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Authorities in Berlin have so far been mum on the issue as well, as the defense and foreign ministries have refused comments to the German press. A spokesman for Chancellor Angela Merkel's CDU parliamentary faction, Henning Otte, told Reuters the government would "wait and see" what the Americans would do. Still, he also noted

that such decisions need to be discussed “*either bilaterally or within NATO*” first.

The defense policy spokesman for Germany's Social Democrats, Fritz Felgentreu, said that it is up to Washington to act as it sees fit, but added that such a move is definitely unsuitable for exerting pressure on Berlin.

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