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Germany rebuffs US call to send ground troops to Syria

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Germany has turned down a request from Washington to deploy ground forces in Syria as the US military looks to scale back its presence in the region, describing the proposal as inconsistent with Berlin's "well known" policy.

US Special Representative for Syria Engagement James Jeffrey confirmed on Sunday that he had asked the German government to provide troops to replace a portion of US forces currently stationed in Syria. He said the request was part of Washington's preparations for an eventual US military withdrawal in the country.

Berlin didn't wait long before issuing a curt "*nein*" to its transatlantic ally.

*"When I say the government envisages sticking to the current measures in the anti-Islamic State (military) coalition, this includes no ground troops, as is well known,"* government spokesman Steffen Seibert said during a news conference on Monday.

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The response shouldn't come as a shock to Washington. Germany has generally been wary of a direct military intervention in Syria. In May of last year, Chancellor Angela Merkel assured the public that the Bundeswehr "*will not participate in possible military actions.*"

While Germany has shunned the idea, Jeffrey seems confident that other US allies will commit to sending troops to Syria. The US diplomat [told](#) Defense One that he expects a "*breakthrough*"

agreement in the coming weeks, which would include coalition forces replacing US troops as they withdraw from Syria.

Filling in for US troops in Syria will come with certain moral and legal hazards, however. US military forces have been operating in Syria without the consent of Damascus or UN authorization, what is tantamount to an illegal occupation.

Damascus insists that the Western military presence in Syria is illegitimate, pledging to liberate “every inch” of the country from uninvited foreign troops.

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