

Germany rejects US request to deploy ground troops in Syria



Peshmerga soldiers disassemble a Milan anti-tank missile system after a day of training with German soldiers at Bnaslawa, Iraq, Jan. 26, 2017. Image: Sgt. Josephine Carlson/US Army

Germany said Monday it had no plans to send ground troops to Syria, refusing a U.S. request for Berlin to ramp up its military involvement in the fight against Islamic State militants.

“When I say that the government intends to continue with its ongoing measures in the framework of the anti-IS coalition, then that means no ground troops,” German government spokesperson Steffen Seibert said on July 8.

U.S. special representative on Syria James Jeffrey told German media that Washington wants Berlin to put boots on the ground in northern Syria.

Jeffrey, who was visiting Berlin for Syria talks, added that he expects an answer this month.

The mandate for Germany’s participation in Syria runs out on October 31,

meaning that parliament would be called on to decide what to do beyond that date.

Seibert noted that Germany has “for years been making a significant and internationally acknowledged contribution” to fighting ISIS.

Berlin is now in talks with the U.S. on “how the engagement should develop further,” he added.

Washington has two goals in northeastern Syria: to support the U.S.-backed Kurdish forces that expelled ISIS from northern Syria because they are increasingly threatened by Turkey and to prevent a potential ISIS resurgence in the war-torn country.

The U.S. is hoping Europe will help, pressuring the United Kingdom, France and now Germany, which has so far deployed surveillance aircraft and other non-combat military support in Syria.

However, Germany’s history makes military spending and foreign adventures controversial.

Berlin sent soldiers to fight abroad for the first time since World War II in 1994, and much of the political spectrum and the public remains suspicious of such deployments.

Besides Chancellor Angela Merkel’s junior coalition partner SPD, the ecologist Greens, liberal Free Democrats and Left party have all urged the veteran leader to turn down the U.S. request for troops.



US State and Defense departments hurried to rework plans in the wake of Trump's shock decision to pull troops from Syria

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