

Germany seeks crisis meeting of EU foreign ministers

BERLIN (Reuters) - German Foreign Minister Heiko Maas called on Sunday for a crisis meeting of his European Union counterparts this week to discuss escalating tension in the Middle East following the killing of a top Iranian military commander in Iraq by the United States.

"As Europeans, we have tried and tested and resilient channels of communication on all sides, which we must make full use of in this situation," Maas said in a statement.

Maas has proposed to EU foreign affairs chief Josep Borrell that a meeting of the bloc's foreign ministers be brought forward to this week to agree on a common approach.

Maas also said Germany would speak to the Iraqi government after the country's parliament on Sunday backed a recommendation by the prime minister that all foreign troops should be ordered out.

"Our overriding interest is that Iraq's stability and unity should not fall victim to the recent escalation," he said.

Germany has around 120 troops deployed in Iraq under the U.S.-led Operation Inherent Resolve.

"We are ready to continue our support if it is desired and the situation allows it," Maas said.

"We are now discussing this intensively with our partners, in the NATO Council, in the European Union, in the anti-IS coalition, and above all with our contacts in Iraq."

In the meantime, Germany has decided to postpone an upcoming switch out of its troops in Iraq, the defense ministry said in a post on Twitter on Sunday.

Reporting by Sabine Siebold; Writing by Emma Thomasson; Editing by Daniel Wallis

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