



By: TA | AP Insight

Why are allies confused by Trump's statements about US troops in Europe?



NATO allies and defense officials expressed bewilderment Friday at U.S. President Donald Trump's announcement that he would send **5,000 U.S. troops to Poland** just weeks after ordering the same number of forces pulled out of Europe.

The apparent change of mind came after weeks of statements from Trump and his administration about reducing – not increasing – the **U.S. military footprint in Europe**.

Trump's initial order set off a flurry of action among military commanders and left allies already doubtful about America's commitment to Europe's security to ponder what forces they might have to backfill on NATO's eastern flank with Russia and Ukraine.

Earlier this month, the Trump administration said it was **reducing levels in Europe** by about 5,000 troops, and U.S. officials confirmed about 4,000 service members were no longer **rotating into Poland from Germany**.

The dispatch to Germany of U.S. personnel trained to fire long-range missiles was also halted.

But in a post on Truth Social on Thursday, Trump said he would now send "an additional 5,000 Troops to Poland," citing his strong ties with Polish President Karol Nawrocki, whom Trump endorsed in elections last year.

"It is confusing indeed, and not always easy to navigate," Swedish Foreign Minister Maria Malmer Stenergard told reporters Friday at a meeting she was hosting of her NATO counterparts, including U.S. Secretary of State Marco Rubio.

Ministers from the Netherlands and Norway were sanguine about Trump's latest move, as was Latvian Foreign Minister Baiba Braže, who said allies knew the U.S. troop "posture was being reconsidered, and now there is no change of posture. For now."

U.S. defense officials also expressed confusion. "We just spent the better part of two weeks

reacting to the first announcement. We don't know what this means either," said one of two officials who spoke on condition of anonymity to discuss sensitive military matters.

But Rubio said Washington's allies understand that changes in the U.S. troop presence in Europe will come as the Trump administration reevaluates its force needs. "I think there's a broad recognition that there are going to be eventually less U.S. troops in Europe than there has historically been for a variety of reasons," he said.

US withdrawal followed German criticism

The latest surprise came despite a U.S. pledge to coordinate troop deployments, including one from NATO's top military officer, U.S. Lt. Gen. Alex Grynkewich, on Wednesday.

Trump's initial announcement that he would withdraw troops came as he fumed over remarks by German Chancellor **Friedrich Merz**, who said that the U.S. was being "humiliated" by the Iranian leadership and criticized what he called a lack of strategy in that war.

Rubio insisted that Trump's decision is not a punitive thing. It's just something that's ongoing

Trump told reporters that the U.S. would be cutting even more than 5,000 and also announced new **tariffs on European cars**. Germany is the continent's biggest auto producer.

Rubio insisted that Trump's decision "is not a punitive thing. It's just something that's ongoing."

The US has a commitment to keep at least 76,000 troops in Europe

About 80,000 U.S. troops are stationed in Europe. The **Pentagon** is required to keep at least 76,000 troops and major equipment on the continent unless NATO allies are consulted and there is a determination that such a withdrawal is in U.S. interests.

The withdrawal of 5,000 troops might drop numbers below that limit.

But Trump's latest post suggests that troop numbers in Europe would not change.



Polish Foreign Minister Radek Sikorski welcomed the decision to send more forces to his country

Polish Foreign Minister Radek Sikorski welcomed the decision to send more forces to his country, saying it ensures that “the presence of American troops in Poland will be maintained more or less at previous levels.”

NATO Secretary-General Mark Rutte also welcomed the move. On Thursday, before Trump took to Truth Social again, Rutte had underlined that it was important for Europe to take care of its own security. “We have a process in place. This is normal business,” he told reporters.

At NATO headquarters in Brussels, meanwhile, U.S. officials briefed the allies on the Pentagon's aims for its commitments to the NATO Force Model, which involves contingency planning for Europe's defense in the event of serious security concerns. It was widely expected that a further reduction of U.S. forces would be coming.

Asked whether any cuts were announced, Rutte said: “I'm afraid it's much more

complicated than that.” He said the procedure “is highly classified” and declined to give details.

Rubio played down concerns about a shift in U.S. force levels in Europe, saying: “Every country has to constantly reevaluate what their needs are, what their commitments are around the world, and how to properly structure that.”