

## ***Biden Freezes Trump's Withdrawal of 12,000 Troops From Germany***

The move halts a Trump administration decision to shift some units to Belgium and Italy and bring others home, a plan that had rankled European leaders and angered lawmakers in both parties.



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WASHINGTON — President Biden is freezing plans to withdraw 12,000 American troops from Germany, administration officials said on Thursday, and has ordered the Pentagon to conduct a review of how American forces are deployed around the world.

The move would halt a Trump administration plan — which many national security experts had viewed as punitive — to bring some American troops home from Germany and to shift other units to Belgium and Italy. That plan, which came last summer, rankled European leaders and angered both Democratic and Republican lawmakers, who view the presence of American troops in Europe, and especially in Germany, as a cornerstone of the post-World War II order.

Mr. Biden's freeze of the troop withdrawal, announced Thursday by Jake Sullivan, the national security adviser, ahead of the president's visit to the State Department also accompanies what Mr. Sullivan called "a global force posture review."

The freeze is in keeping with a series of moves the new president has made in the last two weeks to undo former President Donald J. Trump's initiatives at the Pentagon. Mr. Biden has also ended his predecessor's ban on transgender troops serving in the military and, through Defense Secretary Lloyd J. Austin III, purged from Pentagon advisory boards several dozen members who were appointed in the waning days of the Trump administration. The Biden administration also announced Thursday that it was discontinuing American support for the Saudi-led war in Yemen.

The top American commander in Europe signaled the review in remarks to reporters on Wednesday, when he said that Mr. Austin was "in the process of conducting a very, very thorough review" of Mr. Trump's drawdown plan.

"The new administration has comfortably stated to us that we need to conduct a thorough review, cradle to grave, in all areas," Gen. Tod D. Wolters, the head of United States European Command and NATO's supreme allied commander for Europe, said in a news conference from Mons, Belgium. After the review, he said, "we'll go back to the drawing board."

In announcing Mr. Trump's plans last summer, his deputies at the Pentagon tried to portray it as a needed reshuffling. But that effort was undercut by Mr. Trump himself when he complained — at the same time his administration was announcing the withdrawal — that Germany was, in his words, "delinquent" in its military spending.

The withdrawal announcement last summer blindsided German officials and even some American military officials, who have long looked at the American troop presence in Germany as the bedrock of its commitment to NATO.

A Defense Department official said Thursday that it was unclear whether Mr. Biden adjust the troop levels in Somalia. In one of the last Pentagon-related acts in his presidency, Mr. Trump ordered the 700 American troops who were training and advising Somali counterparts in the battle against the Shabab in East Africa to leave Somalia. On Jan. 17, the Pentagon announced in a short statement that the American troop withdrawal from Somalia was complete.

Many of those troops simply relocated to nearby Kenya, though.

Mr. Biden must also decide what to do about the remaining 2,500 American troops in Afghanistan. Mr. Trump last year struck a deal with the Taliban that calls for the withdrawal of American troops by May 1, but that withdrawal depends on whether the Taliban meets its own commitment to end violence there.