

# Plan would put German troops in U.S.

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WASHINGTON — Officials in Bonn and Washington are pondering an unorthodox idea that might help preserve not only the NATO alliance but also some domestic U.S. military bases. They want to station German troops in the United States.

"If we want to make this a really living, strong alliance, then it should be quite natural to use training facilities of the U.S. Army or Navy or Air Force in this country, just as it is a quite natural thing to have U.S. troops in Germany," said Werner Hoyer, a member of the Bundestag, the lower house of the German parliament.

Mr. Hoyer said he and other Bundestag defense experts visiting here this week had raised the suggestion with Stephen Hadley, assistant secretary of defense for international security policy, and other top U.S. officials.

The German lawmakers said U.S. officials reacted favorably to the

idea of a permanent German military presence that could be far larger than the 2,500 German troops who regularly rotate through the United States for training.

"I find a lot of sympathy for this question in this city now," Mr. Hoyer said, "especially in view of the reductions and base closures that have been announced ... a couple of weeks ago."

Defense Secretary Dick Cheney has proposed to a presidentially appointed commission that three military bases in Texas and 28 others around the country be shut down. The closures are part of a plan to cut the size of the armed forces by 25 percent over the next five years.

Carswell Air Force Base in Fort Worth, Bergstrom Air Force Base near Austin and Chase Naval Air Station at Beeville are among the facilities Mr. Cheney has asked the commission to close. The panel is expected to accept his plan, which would cost the affected communities thousands of jobs.

Col. Peter Treche, chief of staff

at the office of the German Military Representative in Washington, said, the German forces being trained in America included 1,000 at Fort Bliss in El Paso and about 500 at Shepard Air Force Base in Wichita Falls. The rest are scattered at some 70 U.S. bases, he said.

Mr. Hoyer, a Free Democratic Party member, and fellow Bundestag member Bernd Wilz, spokesman on defense for Chancellor Helmut Kohl's ruling Christian Democratic Union, said at a breakfast with reporters that the idea of sending German troops to this country had arisen from the new situation in Europe.

The end of the Cold War and last year's U.S.-Soviet agreement to withdraw thousands of troops from Europe has prompted suggestions that a U.S.-led NATO is no longer needed and should be replaced by a new, European-led system. But Bonn wants to keep U.S. troops in Germany to guarantee German security.

At the same time, Mr. Wilz said,

reunited Germany — despite its fallure to send troops to the gulf war — is searching for ways to confirm and play its new role as a sovereign and equal partner within NATO.

Alluding to Germany's former status as an occupied country with thousands of foreign troops on its soil and hardly any of its own troops abroad, Mr. Wilz said it was important that "the rights and obligations of all partners" in the alliance be made clear.

If all partners are to be equal, he said, "It wouldn't make sense just to do everything in Holland or Germany or the United Kingdom."

A White House official, speaking on condition of anonymity, confirmed that the idea of stationing German troops on U.S. soil was "something which has been discussed. I don't know how far along any discussion has gotten, but there is some appeal to the idea."

Mr. Hoyer said, "It's not a big scale debate yet, but it's going to be one."

