

German far-right leader welcomes US troop withdrawal

BERLIN (AP) — The leader of Germany's biggest far-right party has welcomed U.S. President Donald Trump's decision to withdraw thousands of American troops from the European Union country.

Tino Chrupalla, the co-chairman of Alternative for Germany, told public broadcaster ZDF the move was in line with his party's program, which seeks the removal of Allied troops and American nuclear warheads from German soil.

The Trump administration intends to bring about 6,400 American troops home from Germany and shift about 5,600 to other countries in Europe. The plan, which Trump has linked to Berlin's failure to spend enough on its own military, foresees leaving about 24,000 troops in Germany.

"In my opinion this even makes Europe a bit more peaceful," Chrupalla said in the ZDF interview broadcast Sunday.

He added the withdrawal of U.S. troops "can be a signal toward Russia."

His comments echo those of Germany's ex-communist Left party, which has praised the U.S. move. Both parties have close ties to Moscow, which considers the presence of U.S. troops in Europe an affront to its interests.

Chrupalla said he also favors lifting economic sanctions imposed on Russia over its 2014 annexation of Ukraine's Crimean Peninsula.

Alternative for Germany entered the national parliament for the first time in 2017, coming third with 12.6% of the vote. The party has recently lost traction in opinion polls amid infighting over suspected extremist links among some of its members and a surge in support for German Chancellor Angela Merkel's handling of the coronavirus pandemic.

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