

Germany to Send 2,000 More Troops to Afghanistan - Paper

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BERLIN: Germany plans to send up to 2,000 more soldiers to Afghanistan in response to requests from the United States and other NATO partners, a German newspaper reported on Wednesday.

Citing NATO and German Defence Ministry sources, the Westdeutsche Allgemeine Zeitung reported that the United States and NATO members had already received signals to this effect.

A ministry spokesman declined to confirm the report and referred to the government's repeated position that no decisions will be made before January's international conference on Afghanistan in London.

Germany has the third biggest NATO contingent in Afghanistan with close to 4,500 soldiers. Boosting that number would require a new parliamentary mandate but opinion polls show a majority of Germans are against the deployment.

German troops are stationed mostly in northern Afghanistan and Berlin has refused so far to send soldiers to the more dangerous south.

A political row in Berlin over a German-ordered air strike in Afghanistan in September that killed civilians has forced a cabinet minister and the head of the country's armed forces to resign, making the prospect of boosting troop levels even more sensitive.

(Reporting by Andreas Kenner; writing by Madeline Chambers)

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