

German troops sent to France in symbolic defence of the euro

Written by Angelique Chrisafis
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German troops have been stationed in France as a gesture of unity between the two countries. (Photograph: Daniel Maurer/AFP/Getty Images)

German combat troops were stationed in France for the first time since the Nazi occupation during the second world war.

The force stationed outside Strasbourg was agreed by Nicolas Sarkozy and Angela Merkel as a show of unity between the countries. The French defence minister, Alain Juppé, hailed the "highly symbolic" move as an end to "centuries of conflict".

The French-German Brigade was created in 1989. Until this year, German combat troops had

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not been stationed in France, only French ones in [Germany](#) – a legacy of the allies' post-war occupation there. German forces occupied France during the 1939-45 war for more than four years, the third major war between the two countries in 75 years.

"German soldiers are today welcome in France," the German chancellor said at a meeting with Sarkozy, the French president, in Freiburg. "For me, that has great symbolism, after all the misdeeds Germany was guilty of during the Nazi era."

Sarkozy said: "It is an honour for us to receive German soldiers in a peaceful context on the French Republic's territory."

The two countries' leaders vowed their "total" determination to defend the [euro](#) from the turmoil of Europe's government debt crisis in the run-up to the Brussels summit next week. But they stood by their rejection of raising money through pan-European bonds or expanding a €750bn (£630bn) rescue fund.

Germany and France, the eurozone's first and second largest economies, and its bankrollers, are at odds with many other governments on how best to keep the crisis from spreading and forcing more expensive bailouts, following the financial rescues for Ireland and Greece.

"Let one thing be very clear: we are deeply attached to the euro," Sarkozy said. "We will defend the euro, because the euro is Europe."

Merkel said Germany was determined to defend the 16-nation currency. Its significance went "far beyond" monetary union, she said. "If the euro fails, Europe fails," she added. "This is a deeply serious matter for me. And that's why Germany will do everything to defend the euro jointly with the other countries."