

# German-American Officials Explore Transatlantic ‘Backbone’ at Munich Security Conference

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MUNICH (Feb. 22, 2018) – Just in the past five years, events like the Annexation of Crimea and political changes in the U.S. and Europe have some officials and members of civil society publicly voicing their concerns about the strength of the transatlantic alliance, even right down to the “backbone.”

Chairman of the [Munich Security Conference](#) Ambassador Wolfgang Ischinger referred to the German-American partnership as the “backbone” of the transatlantic alliance, and of the conference. He was speaking to members of the [Loisach Group](#) after their eight-hour, side event at the Munich Security Conference held here Feb. 19.

## Munich Security Conference Collaboration

Each February, the Munich Security Conference brings together more than 450 senior decision-makers from around the world to engage in an intensive debate on current and future security challenges.



MUNICH (Feb. 19, 2018) – Commander of the German Army Lt. Gen. Jörg Vollmer participates in the panel discussion on the state of the German and U.S. strategic dialogue as part of the Loisach Group’s side event at the Munich Security Conference here Feb. 19. The Loisach Group is a collaboration between the Munich Security Conference and George C. Marshall European Center for Security Studies, based in Garmisch-Partenkirchen, Germany. (Marshall Center photo by Christine June)

The Loisach Group is a collaboration between the Munich Security Conference and [George C. Marshall European Center for Security Studies](#), based in Garmisch-Partenkirchen, Germany. The Marshall Center is a 25-year old German-American security partnership that has produced generations of global security professionals schooled in American and German security policies.

“Our (Loisach Group) guiding principle is the belief that the German-U.S. partnership is the key relationship in America’s security relationship with Europe beyond NATO,” said retired U.S. Army Lt. Gen. Keith W. Dayton, the Marshall Center director. “This transatlantic relationship is at the foundation of our group and is, we believe, the key to our mutual security.”

The Loisach Group was formed last year to focus on enhancing the security partnership between the United States and Germany with a view toward establishing an enduring strategic dialogue platform.

The Loisach Group held a roundtable discussion engaging ambassadors, former White House officials, and senior German and American military officers, academics and journalists to further strengthen the strategic dialogue by discussing the lessons identified by this year's Munich Security Conference.

"I think it's very important that we had this meeting immediately after the Munich Security Conference because it gave us the chance to reflect on what has been said, especially about how to foster the German-American relationship," said the Commander of the German Army Lt. Gen. Jörg Vollmer. "What the Loisach Group brought together today was good and open discussions, exchange of thoughts, and gave all of us, I think, an idea on what we need to improve in the upcoming weeks and months."

### **'Most Important Relationship in the World'**

Vollmer was a part of the panel discussion on the state of the German and U.S. strategic dialogue along with retired U.S. Army Lt. Gen. Frederick Benjamin "Ben" Hodges III, former commanding general of [United States Army Europe](#).

"I believe that the relationship between Germany and the United States is the most important relationship in the world for the United States," Hodges said. "Germany is a partner that we need to jealously guard and protect that relationship – strategically important for us."

"The Loisach Group is another line of effort to help achieve that," he said.

### **'Strategic Dialogue'**

This is the first time that Loisach Group held a side event at the Munich Security Conference. The other panel discussion at this side event was on aligning U.S. and German security policy. Sharing their thoughts on this discussion were Dr. Karl-Heinz Kamp, president of the Federal Academy for Security Policy in Berlin, and Dr. Dan Hamilton, executive director of the Center of Transatlantic Relations at the Johns Hopkins University in Washington, D.C.

"I couldn't be more pleased with the level of engagement and the level of interest," said Dr. Andrew A. Michta, dean of the Marshall Center's College of International and Security Studies. "I think we have taken a very significant step in building that network of people who are committed to the German-American security strategic dialogue that Secretary of Defense Mattis mentioned when he was here."

The U.S. Secretary of Defense Jim Mattis and German Minister of Defense Ursula von der Leyen visited the Marshall Center for the 70th Anniversary of the Marshall Plan Commemoration Ceremony in June last year.

"They inaugurated something they called a new 'strategic dialogue' between Germany and the United States," Dayton said. "In my view, this was a recognition that the security bond between our two countries was extremely important and could not be allowed to fade."

### **Loisach Group's Past, Future**

The name of the group refers to the river in Garmisch-Partenkirchen and the fact that the water from the Loisach River flows into Munich. The first meeting of the Loisach Group was in May last year, and the second meeting was a few months later in December.

Michta said the next meeting for the Loisach Group is planned for this summer before the NATO Summit in Brussels.

“We will be able to generate some additional ideas and hopefully, send it to our stakeholders in Berlin and Washington, D.C.,” he said.