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## **U.S. LAWMAKERS URGE TRUMP TO SUPPORT ██████████ IN IRAQ, IF ISIS IS DRIVEN OUT**

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A bipartisan group of legislators appealed to President Donald Trump, advocating continued U.S. support for Iraq ██████ after the potential defeat of the Islamic State group, also known as ISIS. The senators' request came as President Trump met with Iraqi Prime Minister Haider al-Abadi for the first time at the White House Tuesday.

Sixteen lawmakers, including Republican Bob Corker, head of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee and Democrat Jack Reed, ranking member of the Senate Armed Services Committee, wrote to Trump urging him to play a role in reconstructing Iraq; the country is devastated by 14 years of constant warfare beginning with the 2003 U.S. invasion and toppling of President Saddam Hussein and, most recently, the rise of ISIS. The jihadists took major cities such as Fallujah and Ramadi in 2014, prompting a limited redeployment of U.S. forces. As Iraqi troops, backed by the U.S., Kurdish forces and Iran-backed Shiite Muslim militias dislodged ISIS from its final stronghold in Iraq's second city of Mosul, the lawmakers urged Trump not to abandon the country.

We write to you united in our desire to see the Government of Iraq and the Iraqi people seize the opportunity of the forthcoming defeat of ISIS on the battlefield, the lawmakers wrote, according to The Hill. Pushing ISIS out of Iraq has united its people around a common cause. Now, that sense of unity must turn to rebuilding the country.

The authors advised Trump to back Abadi in stabilizing the country after ISIS' defeat. They advocated that the U.S. address Iraq's growing humanitarian crisis, which includes up to 4.2 million internally displaced people potentially in need of assistance, and the disbanding of the Popular Mobilization Units, comprised of majority-Shiite Muslim militias assisted by Iran and absorbed into the Iraqi army to defeat ISIS. The paramilitary force, believed to consist of over 60,000 fighters, has played a crucial role in the nationwide effort to reverse ISIS gains, but their tentative truce with U.S.-backed forces could collapse once Mosul and remaining jihadist pockets were recaptured.

The letter came after Trump met with Abadi and reportedly reassured him of the U.S.' continued support for Baghdad. Trump, who was opposed to the 2003 Iraq War under former President George W. Bush and was once supportive of a U.S. withdrawal, told Abadi that U.S. troops "never should have left," according to Al Jazeera. Trump blamed former President Barack Obama's 2011 withdrawal of U.S. forces for the rise of ISIS, which began as al-Qaeda's branch in Iraq during the Iraq War. The ultraconservative Sunni Muslim militants launched a violent, sectarian campaign

against U.S. soldiers and the local Shiite Muslim community before declaring themselves the Islamic State of Iraq and, later, ISIS.

The U.S. has deployed about 5,000 troops to support Iraq's anti-ISIS operations, the maximum allowed by Obama-era regulations. The Pentagon has since considered abolishing this cap, along with the limit of 500 troops in neighboring Syria where the U.S. has also played a role in fighting ISIS by sponsoring the Kurdish-dominated Syrian Democratic Forces, according to The Washington Post. In Syria, the Russia-backed Syrian government and Turkey-backed Syrian opposition have also participated in separate campaigns against ISIS.

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Kaynak/Source: