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## **BAGHDAD STILL UNABLE TO DETERMINE NEW US POLICY TOWARD IRAQ**

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Sputnik (28 March 2017)

Iraq is still unable to determine US President Donald Trump's policy as his administration is in no hurry to assume positions while it examines issues, Iraqi President Fuad Masum told Sputnik.

BAGHDAD (Sputnik) □ He confirmed that Trump "pledged support in the fight against terrorism and help in rebuilding Iraq" during Iraqi Prime Minister Haider Abadi's visit to the White House last week.

Iraqis inspect the damage in the Mosul al-Jadida area on March 26, 2017, following air strikes in which civilians have been reportedly killed during an ongoing offensive against the Islamic State (IS) group

"As for Mr. Trump's policy, we still cannot say what it is because they are still examining a number of issues and are in no hurry to make decisions and take any positions," Masum said.

Masum said the Trump administration's deliberation is "natural."

"We observe, discuss mainly the nature of our relations with the US, what their future is, how we will develop them," he said.

In this undated file photo released by a militant website, which has been verified and is consistent with other AP reporting, militants of the Islamic State group hold up their weapons and wave its flags on their vehicles in a convoy on a road leading to Iraq, while riding in Raqqa city in Syria

On March 20, Trump and Abadi held a meeting in the United States and discussed cooperation and the US support of the Middle Eastern nation.

According to the White House, during the meeting, Trump reiterated his support of Iraq in the struggle against Daesh terrorist group.

On Monday, Operation Inherent Resolve spokesman Col. Joseph Scrocca confirmed media reports that Washington was sending some 200 additional troops to the crisis-torn state to assist the Iraqi army in its anti-Daesh operations.

The cooperation between the two states under Trump's administration goes beyond counterterrorism area, as the issues of immigration also play an important role in bilateral ties. Despite the fact that Iraq was included in the first Trump's immigration executive order, banning citizens from seven countries from entering the United States for a 90-day period, the country was excluded from the travel ban list in the second order.

The government of Iraq expects its territory to be cleared of the Daesh jihadist group (banned in numerous countries, including Russia) ground presence shortly, Fuad Masum added.

"As for the final victory over IS [Daesh] and its eradication, it will take some time, but the IS presence as a military force 'on the ground' I believe will end in a short time," Masum said.

He clarified that victory over "the organization and the cells which operate from time to time will take more time."

"We have received and continue to receive assistance form different countries, but we will need time after defeating IS [Daesh] as a military force for cooperation and coordination with different countries, because IS is not only a military force but also a terrorist ideology that resorts to various forms of actions," Masum said.

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Kaynak/Source: