
ARMY CHIEF: FUTURE OF US TROOPS IN IRAQ TBD AS ISIS CRUMBLES

- 18.01.2018

Defence News, 17 Jan 2018

The U.S. Army chief of staff, who recently returned from a trip to Iraq, said U.S. troops there will continue to help Iraqi security forces root out Islamic State militants, but what comes after that for the Army in the war-torn country remains to be seen.

I think the situation in Iraq is a lot different than it was three or four years ago when ISIS came rolling out of the desert and screaming down the Euphrates River Valley, Gen. Mark Milley told reporters Jan. 17 following an Association of the U.S. Army breakfast in Arlington, Virginia.

The caliphate, such as it was in terms of owning land, etc. □ that has been destroyed. And the land that ISIS, or Daesh, controlled has been liberated. Its back in Iraqi hands and that has reverted to what would be called sort of small-scale terrorism, he said.

Just the other day, for example, there was a small attack in Baghdad, Milley noted, adding that ISIS no longer replicates or has a proto-state sort of thing, so that is a big step forward.

But the war against ISIS is not yet over, and Milley has visited Iraq, as well as U.S. soldiers there who are helping Iraqi security forces, to get a sense of what needs to be done. There is a lot of work left to be done, he said.

Yet, what the combatant commander decides for future U.S. troop presence in both Iraq and Syria has yet to be determined. We will see what the combatant commander, how he wants to shift gears once ISIS is defeated, Milley said. But the Iraqi security forces are in a consolidation period where they have to continue to eliminate the small pockets of terrorists and insurgents, the ISIS terrorists that are out there, and we will help them do that.

Milley wouldnt say whether such troop presence could include the Armys newly conjured security

force assistance brigades designed specifically to train, advise, assist and enable foreign militaries and police forces.

The first SFAB based out of Fort Benning, Georgia, is headed to Afghanistan next month and has been training rigorously at the Joint Readiness Training Center ahead of the deployment.

Sign up for our Daily News Roundup

The top Defense News stories of the day [Subscribe](#)

Milley said during the breakfast that SFABs formally institutionalize a practice of training, advising, assisting and enabling indigenous forces that has long been resident in the Army. Funding for the new units were requested for the first time in the fiscal 2018 Army budget yet to be approved by Congress.

The need has been there for a long time, and we have met that need, Milley said, but we have met it in the last 16 years through ad hoc measures, in my opinion, and I've been a participant in that.

That is not say its bad, its just been ad hoc and its been very disruptive to the training of the force structure that does exist for conventional higher-end operations.

Milley lamented having to previously break up brigade combat teams to create units that could support indigenous forces in an advisory role.

The Army, for example, has trained, advised and assisted forces in Iraq and Afghanistan but had to do so at the expense of the conventional Army. We only have X amount of these brigade combat teams, and if we take a whole bunch of them and we shrink them and take their leadership apart and they go through an exercise and become advisers, then you are essentially reducing your ground combat capability by whatever amount you commit to the task, Milley said.

The chief said the second SFAB is being established at Fort Bragg, North Carolina, and will deploy this time next year. The Army is deciding where to station the third SFAB in the U.S. and will stand up the fourth and fifth in 2019 as well as one within the Army National Guard.

Kaynak/Source: