HASHD AL-SHAABI DEMANDS US IMMEDIATELY WITHDRAW FROM IRAQ

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14.02.2018

AMN, 14/02/20182

Disgruntlement is rising over the presence of the US military in Iraq. The US not only stayed in Iraq after defeating Daesh but is expanding its military presence there, with more than 5,000 of American military men in Iraq and military bases in cities like Baghdad, Dahuk, Mosul, Kirkuk, Sulaymaniyah and Erbil.

Speaking with Sputnik, Kenan Tuzlu, commander of the Turkmen unit of the Iraqi security forces Hashd ash-Shaabi, emphasized that American forces are aggressive, occupying forces and demanded their withdrawal from Iraq.

We dont want the US or any other foreign militarys presence in Iraq. We consider it unacceptable. There is no rational explanation for the American presence in our country. Earlier they pretended to fight Daesh for their troops to stay in Iraq. Now Daesh is over and the Americans dont have any reliable pretext. We had been against the American presence in Iraq even before Daesh was destroyed. Our forces and the Iraqi army were fighting against Daesh. An agreement according to which the Americans should leave the country was completed in 2011 in the US. However, they dont stick to this agreement. Iraqi people dont want American military people to stay in the country. No country can agree to be occupied by another country, he said.

Kenan Tuzlu also warned that if the US continues its military presence in Iraq, Hashd ash-Shaabi will regard it as the enemy.

He emphasized, The leader of Hashd ash-Shaabi, Ebu Mehdi Muhendis, never wanted the US presence in Iraq. All Hashd ash-Shaabi senior officers also demand the withdrawal of the American forces from the country. American military forces set up their bases mainly in the sites where Kurdish forces are located. The Hashd ash-Shaabi territorial army doesnt need the US military forces to be present in Iraq.

Meanwhile, the Iraqi Armys victory over Daesh was declared last December by the Iraqi Prime Minister Haider al-Abadi after the countrys forces gained complete control over the border with Syria.

Last week, an Iraqi government spokesman reportedly confirmed that the US had begun to draw down its forces, following Baghdads declaration of victory over Daesh. Western contractors at a US-led coalition base said earlier that dozens of American soldiers had been transported to Afghanistan over the past weeks.

An Iraqi official close to al-Abadi said earlier that the initial agreement stipulated the withdrawal of some 60 percent of the current US contingent, while 4,000 troops would stay to train the Iraqi military.

Such an agreement between the coalition and the Iraqi government has been reached for the first time since the war against Daesh in the Middle Eastern country was launched three years ago.

Daesh took over much of Iraq in 2014, when it seized Mosul, the countrys second-biggest city, and made it the terrorist groups so-called capital in Iraq. A year later, the countrys forces, supported by the US-led coalition, launched an operation to free the territories.

Iraqi forces regained control over Mosul last summer. In November, they retook the town of Rawa, the last Daesh stronghold in the country.

However, US Secretary of State Rex Tillerson said in October last year at a congressional hearing that the United States would maintain a military presence in Iraq under the Authorization for Use of Military Force until Daesh is completely eliminated.

We will remain in Iraq until ISIS [Daesh] is defeated ☀ under the 2001 and 2002 AUMFs, Tillerson stated before the US Senate Foreign Relations Committee. We are there also at the invitation of the Iraqi government.

Kaynak/Source: