
PRESENCE OF US FORCES STIRS DEBATE IN IRAQ

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Asharq Al-Awsat (14 January 2019)

Baghdad – Hamza Mustafa

Deputy head of the National Axis bloc Mohammed al-Karbouli called on the Iraqi government to be honest with people about its position on the US-Iranian conflict.

Since US President Donald Trump announced the withdrawal of his countrys troops from Syria last month, conflicting news has emerged and reaction to their redeployment in Iraq have varied.

Iraqi political and parliamentary parties have been working to collect the necessary number of signatures needed to prepare a bill that obligates the Iraqi government to expel foreign troops from the country.

Meanwhile, the coalitions of each of former Prime Ministers Nouri al-Maliki and Haidar al-Abadi accused each other of bringing in more US troops into Iraq.

Iraqis have been circulating news of the arrival of American forces at Baghdad airport, a claim denied by the Civil Aviation Authority.

Karbouli, who is also member of the Iraqi parliament's Security and Defense Committee, told Asharq Al-Awsat that the policy followed by the current government is not transparent when it comes to the events taking place in Iraq, both at the level of the cabinet and the nature of the US-Iranian conflict.

It is best to tell the people what is really happening instead of following the policy of hiding facts because that would only aggravate the situation, he stressed.

Commenting on the frequent news on the nature of US presence in Iraq, armed groups expert Dr. Hisham al-Hashemi told Asharq Al-Awsat that the American troops will be divided between the Erbil, Sinjar base, North Rummaneh camp base and Ain al-Assad base in addition to the northern area in Ar-Rutba district.

He explained that among their tasks is keeping the Popular Mobilization Forces away from the region.

This in itself is a problem, he said.

He also pointed out that these troops are moving between the K1 military base south Kirkuk and K2 base north Salaheddine, where they have started to redeploy their forces in disputed areas in

the southern Kurdistan region.

They are also working on reorganizing joint camps in the areas of Mansuriyah up to Halabja, he said, halting forces and parties close to Iran in order to block its economic movement.

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