
THERE WERE NO AND WILL BE NO FOREIGN MILITARY FORCES IN IRAQ - DEFENCE MINISTRY

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BAGHDAD (Sputnik) □ Iraq does not need and will not need foreign troops on its territory and assures that the US forces currently deployed in the country are there in an advisory capacity, a spokesman for the Iraqi Defense Ministry told Sputnik on Thursday.

"Washington does not have any bases in Iraq. There is not even a single US base under US command in Iraq, in the first place. Secondly, all those present are advisers from the international coalition, there is coaching, plans for army training, logistical support, air force efforts," Maj. Gen. Tahsin Khafaji said.

He stressed that when Iraq was fighting to defeat the Daesh* terrorist group, it led ground actions on its own, with foreign support consisting only of advising, arming and air operations.

"I believe that we have succeeded as a team in working with the international coalition and all friendly and fraternal countries to defeat terrorism * I confirm that there were no and there will be no foreign military forces on our borders and in our county," Khafaji noted.

Commenting on the withdrawal of US troops from Syria, the official emphasised that the Iraqi authorities have prepared for it by strengthening the security of its borders.

"We have high-level coordination with the US side through the international coalition and the joint command of the armed forces [of Iraq], and we have taken all precautions at the border regarding the withdrawal of US troops from Syria," he said.

Khafaji noted that Iraqi army units and militias were present on the Iraqi-Syrian border, adding that Iraq had "the strength and capacity to protect the security" of its frontiers. He also stressed that the US servicemen did not enter from Syria to Iraq.

The Defence Ministry's statements come after in October 2018, media reported, citing the Pentagon, that the number of the US servicemen in Iraq stood at around 5,000.

In December 2017, Iraqi Prime Minister Haider Abadi announced a victory over the Daesh jihadists after over three years of fighting, but said that local security and law enforcement services would continue eliminating Daesh sleeper cells.

**Daesh (also known as ISIS/ISIL/IS) is a terrorist organization banned in Russia*

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