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## **IRAQ PRESIDENT HITS BACK AT TRUMP: OUR COUNTRY WON'T BE USED TO ATTACK OTHERS**

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Asharq Al-Awsat (4 February 2019)

Iraqi President Barham Salih hit back on Monday at US President Donald Trump's recent remarks that Washington plans to keep American forces in the country to spy on Iran.

In an interview with CBS television, Trump reaffirmed his determination to pull the United States out of "endless wars" in Syria and Afghanistan but said American troops would stay on in Iraq, partly "to be looking a little bit at Iran".

His comments sparked a new round of demands in Baghdad for US forces to leave the country.

"The Iraqi constitution rejects the use of Iraq as a base for hitting or attacking a neighboring country," Salih said.

US forces were in the country legally under an agreement between the two countries, but that "any action taken outside this framework is unacceptable", he added.

Don't overburden Iraq with your own issues, he demanded. The US is a major power...but do not pursue your own policy priorities, we live here.

Sabah al-Saadi, a member of parliament in the bloc led by cleric Moqtada Sadr, has proposed a bill demanding a US pullout.

Trump's latest remarks had made passing such a law "a national duty".

Deputy speaker of parliament Hassan Karim al-Kaabi, also close to Sadr, said they were a "new provocation", weeks after the US president sparked outrage in Iraq by visiting US troops at Ain al-Asad without meeting a single Iraqi official.

Officially, Iraq says there are no American bases on its soil -- only instructors deployed at Iraqi bases.

Kurdish MP Sarkawt Shams tweeted that the mission of US troops in Iraq was "to help Iraqi security forces against terrorism, not 'watching' others".

"We are expecting the United States to respect Our mutual interests and avoid pushing Iraq into a regional conflict," he said.

Washington has had troops in Iraq since the 2003 US-led invasion that toppled Saddam Hussein.

At the height of its fight against insurgents, it had up to 170,000 US troops in the country, before a partial withdrawal starting in late 2011.

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