
DESPITE U.S.-IRAQ FEUD, IRAQI PRIME MINISTER PRIVATELY MULLS DELAY OF U.S. TROOP DEPARTURE

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Since Friday, when the U.S. killed Iranian general Qasem Soleimani near Iraq's only international airport, Baghdad and Washington have, on the outside, remained locked in a bitter diplomatic feud. Iraq's parliament voted on Sunday that U.S. troops should end their ISIS-fighting mission in the country. Since then, President Donald Trump has repeatedly threatened to impose harsh economic sanctions on the country if it ejects American troops.

On Monday, Mahdi publicly declared that U.S. troops were confined to base, limited to training and advising only, and his office released a statement that he told the U.S. ambassador to Baghdad that both countries needed to implement the withdrawal of foreign forces, even as Trump administration officials try to stave off the expulsion behind the scenes.

But privately, Iraqi Prime Minister Adel Abdul Mahdi has been trying to slow-roll the American departure, Iraqi advisors say, fearful not just of Trump's threatened sanctions, but of the departure of Western investment along with the foreign troops, and a resurgence of the so-called Islamic State without U.S. assets to hunt it.

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