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## **US: TROOP DEAL MADE WITH IRAQI GOVT, NOT PARLIAMENT**

- 24.01.2020

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Anadolu Agency (23 January 2020)

Michael Hernandez

The agreement to station U.S. forces in Iraq was made with the Iraqi government, not its parliament, the U.S. said Thursday after lawmakers called for American forces to be expelled.

James Jeffrey, President Donald Trump's special envoy to the anti-Daesh coalition, told reporters the U.S. has repeatedly said it is not interested in talking about the withdrawal of its forces, but "at the end of the day this is obviously an Iraqi decision on the future of the American and the coalition presence."

"We acknowledge that. We're not interested in sitting down and talking only about withdrawal," he said. "Any conversations that the Iraqis want to have with us about the United States in Iraq, we believe, should and must cover the entire gamut of our entire relationship, which goes way beyond our forces."

Iraqi lawmakers passed a non-binding resolution calling on the government to expel troops earlier this month in response to the U.S. killing of Iranian Gen. Qasem Soleimani in Baghdad.

But Jeffrey maintained the 2014 agreement that allows the U.S. to station forces in Iraq is not with the Iraqi parliament, and is instead a government-to-government agreement "that the parliament was not directly or formally involved in, and that's the basis for us being there."

"Thus our partner in any discussions about our presence is the Iraqi government," he said.

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