

Israel Concerned with Decreasing US Military Involvement in Iraq

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Editor

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Tel Aviv. The US is dramatically decreasing its military involvement in Iraq .This creates great concern in Israel. Israeli sources say that by this the last barrier for the takeover of Iraq by Iran has been removed.

“The International Coalition confirmed that its mission in Iraq to defeat ISIS has shifted from direct combat to additional support for Iraqi forces, including advice and training,” the coalition’s military spokesperson Col. Wayne Marotto, said in statements cited by the official Iraqi news agency.

The spokesperson said the Iraqi army is leading the battle against the ISIS terror group, adding that the coalition will provide the Iraqi security forces with “intelligence, surveillance, reconnaissance, logistics, advice” in addition to other forms of operational and strategic support. Marotto added that the coalition will also provide air support to the Iraqi forces “when requested.”

The spokesperson said the coalition has a presence in Iraq on the “official invitation from the Iraqi government to eliminate terrorists and its remnants in specific parts of Iraq and Syria.” In recent months Iraqi military bases in which there is an American presence were targeted by ISIS , mainly

by missiles. The latest attack on US interests in the country took place earlier this week , when a missile targeted the Ain Al-Asad Air Base in Anbar province. No casualties were reported.

Currently, there are around 3,000 troops, including 2,500 US forces, fighting in the anti- ISIS coalition. The annual threat assessment released in April by the US Office of the Director of National Intelligence states that “Iran will remain a regional menace with broader malign influence activities. The Islamic Republic is expected to continue those malign activities all over the globe, but its focus will likely remain its immediate regional surroundings—particularly Iraq. Tehran views Iraq as a key country over which it must establish and maintain complete supremacy.”

According to a recent strategic assessment prepared by the Begin –Sadat centre for strategic studies, ever since the US invasion of Iraq and the overthrow of Saddam Hussein, Iran’s main objective in Iraq has been to expel the Americans from Iraqi soil. The Iran’s Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps IRGC- which plays an instrumental role in the foreign policy of the Islamic Republic, has been given this critical mission. By supporting different factions, militias, and politicians, as well as by conducting covert operations inside Iraq, Iran aims to destabilize the country to such a degree that the people’s faith in the American forces will be diminished.

The two researchers that wrote the assessment, Dr. Ardavan Khoshnood and Efran Fard , say that by expelling all remaining US forces from Iraq, Iran will be in full control of the country, which would represent a major political and security victory for the Islamic regime. Iran has shown itself to have the upper hand in Iraq. This was apparent as long ago as 2005, when American troops lost control over the country. The CIA has said that most terrorist groups and militias in Iraq are under the control of the IRGC-QF.

“It is essential for Tehran that Iraq remain unstable and chaotic. A stable Iraq would mean Iranian operatives could no longer conduct operations in and through Iraq, as they do today. Iraq is a safe haven for Iranian intelligence and a base from which Iran conducts covert operations.

Control over the Iraqi government would also mean Iran can fulfil its dream of exporting the Shiite revolution. At the same time, the regime can use Iraqi territory for the training of Shiite militias as well as to create a buffer zone for its own security.”

Israeli defence sources say that if Iraq succeeds in its plan to fully control Iraq it will change the situation in the region ” the proximity of Iraq to Israel and its cooperation with Syria turn Iraq a forward base of Iran and that is a problem that will have to be addressed by Israel” one of the sources said.

Throughout the entire Gulf war, Iraqi forces launched approximately 42 Scud missiles into Israel from 17 January to 23 February 1991. The distance between Israel and Iraq is only 530 miles and that enables to attack Israel by relatively basic ballistic missiles.

-The writer is an International Roving Correspondent of the publication.