

Time is ripe for the US to leave

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OPINION

Finally, the United States was forced to sit down with Iraq to discuss the end of the provocative presence of its troops in the Arab country. The two countries began their first round of formal talks on Saturday to wind down the mission of a US-led military coalition formed years ago to eradicate the Daesh (ISIS) terrorist group. However, the US claims that will not involve a US withdrawal from Iraq.



US Army paratroopers prepare to board an aircraft bound for the US Central Command area of operations from Fort Bragg, North Carolina, US, on January 4, 2020.
● REUTERS

Baghdad says the group is defeated and the alliance's job is over in the country. Iraqi Prime Minister Mohamed Shia al-Sudani has recently said that Daesh "is no longer a danger for the Iraqi state, and our armed forces are capable of fully assuming the maintenance of security and stability." But in fact, the US assassination of Abu-Taqwa al-Saedi earlier this month, the leader of Harakat al-Nujaba, that is technically a part of Iraq's security forces, has prompted Iraqi officials to renew their calls for the long-awaited withdrawal of US troops from the country. The 2020 US assassination of senior Iranian military commander Lt. Gen. Qassem Soleimani and Abu Mahdi al-Muhandis, the second-in-command of Iraq's Popular Mobilization Units (PMU), and their companions in Baghdad actually triggered the process of expulsion of US troops from Iraq and perhaps from the region. Soon afterwards, the Iraqi Parliament voted on a resolution to end the US military presence in Iraq – a goal long sought by many regional countries including Iraq's eastern neighbor, Iran. Experts believe that a potential withdrawal of US troops would be a strategic victory for its arch-foe Iran. Tehran believes that regional countries are capable of guaran-

teeing the security of their region without US help. False claims In early 2003, the US invaded Iraq under the later debunked pretext that the regime of Saddam Hussein possessed weapons of mass destruction. However, the alleged weapons of mass destruction were never found, while hundreds of thousands of innocent lives perished in the prolonged war and conflict. US combat forces left the country in 2011, but thousands of troops returned in 2014 on the pretext of helping Baghdad defeat the Daesh terrorist group. During those years the US forces conducted many serious crimes. They subjected Iraqi detainees in Abu Ghraib and other detention sites to torture, including sexual abuse and humiliation, wrongly killed protesters, and hired private military contractors who killed and injured dozens of Iraqi civilians. These inhumane actions gradually strengthened anti-US sentiment among the Iraqi people and led to the formation of resistance groups, which have been carrying out strikes on US troops to force them out of Iraq. However, the hatred towards the US, which has grown in the region in the wake of Washington's unwavering support for the Israeli regime's genocidal acts in the

Gaza Strip, has gained momentum. The US military and financial support for Israel, which has so far killed more than 26,000 Palestinians in nearly four months, has infuriated people in the region. In fact, the ongoing Israeli onslaught on Gaza has presented itself as an opportunity for the regional countries to expel the US from the region. Resistance groups have stepped

up their attacks on the US and Israeli targets in Iraq and elsewhere in the region in response to the massacre of Palestinians in the Gaza Strip. According to the Pentagon, US troops in Iraq and Syria have been attacked over 150 times since mid-October. The most recent attack claimed the lives of three American soldiers in Jordan. Washington claims that the tim-

ing of negotiations with Baghdad isn't related to the attacks on its forces.

Advisory role?

The US military declared the end of its combat mission in Iraq in December 2021, but it still maintains a number of troops there under the guise of playing an advisory role. There are roughly 2,500 US troops in Iraq and about 900 in

Syria as part of the anti-Daesh coalition formed in 2014 – the year the terrorist group overran around a third of Iraq. In Syria, the US military has deployed forces and equipment in the northeast of the country, with the Pentagon claiming that the deployment is aimed at preventing the oilfields in the area from falling into the hands of Daesh terrorists. Damascus, however, says the deployment is aimed at plundering the country's rich mineral resources and to destabilize the country.

Not welcome in Syria, either

Syria has repeatedly urged the US, which supported militants and terrorists during the war in the country, to withdraw its troops illegally stationed in the northeast of the country. There are also conflicting reports that the Pentagon has a plan for Syria's Kurdish militia to cooperate with the Syrian government against Daesh, indicating that the US has plans to eventually withdraw from Syria. However, a senior US official has told CNN that the White House is not considering a withdrawal of forces from Syria. We should wait and see if these countries would be able to expel the US from their countries or not.



Wounded US personnel get flown from Iraq to Ramstein, Germany, for medical treatment in February 2007.
● US AIR FORCE