

Thursday, 02 July 2009

Tells Al Arabiya Iraqi troops can defend US bases US troops could return to Iraq: defense minister



Iraqi Defense Minister Abdul-Qadir al-Obeidi in an interview with Al Arabiya

DUBAI (Al Arabiya)

A day after American troops pulled out of Iraq following their seven-year invasion, Iraq's defense minister said in an interview to air Friday that it was "not unlikely" that American troops could return to at Baghdad's request.

"Iraqi forces are ready to defend American troops and bases in case of any attack in accordance with the joint security agreement between the two countries," Defense Minister Abdul-Qadir al-Obeidi told Al Arabiya in an interview that will air Friday on Min al-Iraq (From Iraq).

When asked about the current role of American troops in Iraq, Obeidi replied that it revolves around providing support. This involves firearms and surveillance support as well as air force backup, especially for evacuating the injured in case of an attack.

"American troops are also involved in carrying out sophisticated communications processes all over Iraq and which are used in detecting complicated bombs until Iraqi troops become capable of doing that themselves," he added.

According to the security agreement between Iraq and the United States, the role of American troops as of June 30, when troops began to pull out, through the full withdrawal at the end of 2011 will shift from mobilization, planning and carrying out security operations to technical consultancy and intelligence support.

American troops hope that their withdrawal from Iraqi cities will reduce the number of terrorist attacks, most of which target their officers. According to U.S. army reports, 100 American soldiers were killed this year, bringing the total killed since the 2003 invasion to more than 4,300.

The withdrawal of American troops from Iraqi cities mark the end of what was termed the "duplicate decision" process where any security operation required the approval of both American and Iraq troops. In many cases, those operations were carried out without the knowledge of one of the two parties, which at times triggered confusion and unrest.

(Translated from Arabic by Sonia Farid)