

RELEASE IN FULL

From: H <hrod17@clintonemail.com>
Sent: Saturday, October 15, 2011 9:13 PM
To: 'abedinh@state.gov'
Subject: Re: No decision yet on future troop presence in Iraq-US (Reuters)

Did you just call me?

From: Abedin, Huma [mailto:AbedinH@state.gov]
Sent: Saturday, October 15, 2011 09:01 PM
To: H
Subject: Fw: No decision yet on future troop presence in Iraq-US (Reuters)

From: OpsNewsTicker
Sent: Saturday, October 15, 2011 08:41 PM
To: NEWS-Iraq; NEWS-Mahogany
Subject: No decision yet on future troop presence in Iraq-US (Reuters)

WASHINGTON (Reuters) - The Obama administration denied a news report Saturday it had made a final decision to pull almost all U.S. troops out of Iraq by a year-end withdrawal deadline.

The White House and Pentagon both denied an Associated Press report citing unnamed U.S. officials saying they completely dropped the idea of possibly keeping a significant contingent in Iraq as trainers for Iraqi security forces beyond 2011.

U.S. and Iraqi officials have been negotiating the prospects for up to several thousand U.S. troops staying, but the main sticking point has been an Iraqi refusal to grant the military personnel legal immunity, as Washington has demanded.

The issue could be a deal-breaker but it is a sensitive one for Iraqis, who have seen abuses by U.S. troops and contractors through the more than eight years since the U.S.-led invasion that toppled Saddam Hussein.

After ending combat operations last year, the last 44,000 U.S. troops are scheduled to leave Iraq by the end of the year under the terms of a bilateral security pact.

But the Obama administration insisted no decision had been reached about the training relationship with Iraq or how many, if any, U.S. troops might stay past the Dec. 31 deadline. The AP report said only about 160 soldiers attached to the U.S. Embassy in Baghdad would stay behind.

"President Obama has repeatedly made it clear that we are committed to keeping our agreement with the Iraqi government to remove all of our troops by the end of this year," White House spokesman Tommy Vietor said.

"At the same time we're building a comprehensive partnership with Iraq under the Strategic Framework Agreement, including a robust security relationship, and discussions with the Iraqis about the nature of that relationship are ongoing."

The Defense Department issued an almost identical statement, but spokesman George Little also said, "Suggestions that a final decision has been reached about our training relationship with the Iraqi government are wrong."

NewsTickers alert senior Department officials to breaking news. This item appears as it did in its original publication and does not contain analysis or commentary by Department sources.