

1.2.2 International involvement

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USA

While some sources reported that, as of June 2025, approximately 2 500 US troops were stationed in Iraq, 84 in the same month the US Department of Defense stated that around 1 500 individuals, including diplomatic staff, contractors, and non-essential personnel, departed Baghdad and Erbil ‘out of an abundance of caution’ amid heightened regional tensions.85

US troops are distributed across four primary bases: Erbil Air Base, the Baghdad Diplomatic Support Center near Baghdad airport, Union III in Baghdad’s Green Zone, and Al-Asad Air Base in Anbar.86 In September 2024, the US and Iraq jointly announced a two-phase plan to conclude coalition operations by September 2026, the first phase of which is set to conclude by September 2025.87 The implementation of this plan was reaffirmed by the US in June 2025,88 although by the end of July 2025, no significant progress had been publicly reported.89 Rather than a complete withdrawal, the coalition mission was undergoing a structural transformation, with US forces expected to maintain a presence in Iraq to continue supporting counter-ISIL operations at least until September 2026.90 The administration of Prime Minister Mohammed Al-Sudani has consistently expressed its interest in sustaining military cooperation with the US and other Western partners.91 Throughout the reference period, US forces remained actively engaged in partnered counterterrorism raids.92 The Combined Joint Task Force – Operation Inherent Resolve (CJTF-OIR) continued to assist Iraqi forces, supported by the Counter-ISIL Train and Equip Fund, which provides salaries, weapons, vehicles, and non-lethal assistance.93

Iran

Iran maintains strong influence in Iraq through its support for powerful Shia militias, including Kata’ib Hezbollah, Asa’ib Ahl Al-Haq and Harakat Hezbollah Al-Nujaba.94 In April 2025, Iran reportedly supplied advanced missiles to Iraqi militias.95 Meanwhile, political ties have deepened, with Iran’s president, Masoud Pezeshkian, visiting the KRI for the first time in September 2024 after years of tensions. In parallel, the Iranian president also signed multiple agreements to enhance bilateral cooperation in with Baghdad.96

While, during the Israel-Iran conflict, Iranian-affiliated armed groups demonstrated relative restraint, Iraq remains, according to International Crisis Group, a ‘central theatre for US-Iran confrontation’, particularly through these proxies.97

Türkiye

As of December 2024, Türkiye reportedly maintained at least 136 military sites and had built 660 kilometres of roads in northern Iraq, enabling control over 2 000 square kilometres.98 A series of Turkish airstrikes in northern Iraq was reported in the first half of the reference period. 99 Turkish airstrikes and incursions continued into early 2025.100 Despite the PKK's declaration of an end to its armed struggle in May 2025, Türkiye maintained its military presence,101 citing concerns over defections and the potential rise of PKK splinter factions.102

For information on the impact of Turkish operations on civilians, please see sections 1.3.1 Security incidents and 1.4.8 Kurdistan Region of Iraq (Erbil, Dohuk, Sulaymaniyah).

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