



[American and Iraqi Officials Meet and Announce an Agreement to Formally Conclude the U.S. Military's Combat Mission in Iraq](#)

President Biden hosted Iraqi Prime Minister Al-Kadhimi at the White House a few days ago where a joint announcement was made on an agreement to formally conclude the U.S. military's combat mission in Iraq by the end of this year. Analysts point out that the move will not include a troop drawdown, but instead focus on solidifying the shift of the U.S. mission in Iraq to a purely advisory role. Many of the armed forces that are currently stationed there provide training services to the Iraqi military to aid them in their fight against ISIS, and the latest action this week would strengthen the United States' advisory and logistics support, air power, and intelligence and surveillance capabilities. All told, the decision will redefine the roles being performed by military personnel within the region and reclassify others on paper. Observers also suspect that it will offer Prime Minister Al-Kadhimi the political cover to try and appease factions within Iraq and bolster his campaign ahead of the parliamentary elections scheduled for later this year in October. At a time when Iraq is facing multiple socioeconomic crises including major protests in the street, Al-Kadhimi likely views the agreement as a way to find a delicate balance between those who are skeptical of the United States' continued presence and others who believe the American troops are beneficial to the prospects of stability.

Al-Kadhimi has been considered largely unsuccessful during his term as Iraq's Prime Minister. His time in office has been plagued by the global pandemic, economic crisis, corruption, protests, and ISIS attacks. This has put immense pressure on him for the upcoming elections that are slated to be held later this year. The joint announcement regarding the United States eliminating its combat force presence is partly a way for the prime minister to attempt to retain power. The protests within the country have been largely fueled by younger segments of the Iraqi population who want a reworking of the political structure, and have been met by security forces with lethal force and suppression. This week's development with the United States enables Al-Kadhimi to try and salvage whatever he can amongst the dissatisfied populace.

The United States hasn't had any true groundbreaking policy change towards Iraq but can claim success by the Biden administration for political reasons. On paper, the end of the combat mission in Iraq is a major accomplishment and a sigh of relief for the United States, which has been involved in Iraq for nearly two decades. However, out of the 2,500 troops in Iraq, there was no clarification on how many were actually combat troops. The U.S. had withdrawn troops from Iraq in 2011, and recommitted a smaller force in 2014 to combat ISIS – which has become a shell of its former self. The current mission in Iraq is primarily training and support with only occasional counterterrorism endeavors by special ops forces.

Both American and Iraqi officials have made political gains with this formal conclusion to the combat mission, but closer analysis shows little to no substantial change within the country. The next true development for Iraq will be the elections scheduled for later this year, and whether they are in fact able to proceed as planned. The United States' advisory role can only do so much, and it is ultimately the Iraqi people that hope to play a significant part in any positive progress within their country.