

US to spend more than \$6bn in Conquered Iraq next year

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US Consolidating Empire

BAGHDAD — The United States is to spend more than \$6 billion in Iraq in 2012 even though its forces are to withdraw from the country by the end of this year, US ambassador James Jeffrey said on Sunday.

US [puppet] President Barack Obama announced on October 21 that the last troops would leave by year's end, but Baghdad will still host the largest American embassy in the world, with a full US mission to Iraq to include up to 16,000 people.

"We are standing up an embassy to carry out a \$6.5 billion programme, when you throw in the refugee programmes as well as the actual State Department budget for 2012, of assistance in support for Iraq on a very broad variety of security and non-security issues," Jeffrey told reporters at a roundtable.

"The direct budget, operating and assistance (to Iraq), was \$6.2 billion," Jeffrey said.

He said there is also "a little less than \$300 million that goes to refugee and displaced person programmes."

"It doesn't come directly onto the Iraq account ... but we get a very significant part of that here, and it's used by other agencies and activities for example in Jordan and Syria," home of sizeable Iraqi refugee communities.

Jeffrey also discussed US military sales to Iraq.

"We have about \$8 billion, give or take some, of active (foreign military sales) cases with Iraq."

"That's not counting the new one that just came out for the F-16s (warplanes). That will send it up by a number of additional billions of dollars," Jeffrey said.

"This is one of the biggest programmes in the world," he said.

"We have a large number of trainers and people from the defence contracts that are doing the equipping and training of the Iraqis throughout the country."

"We want to see other ways that ... we can support Iraq to develop their conventional capabilities and to continue the fight against terror. This is a very important joint priority of ours," Jeffrey said.

"The Al-Qaeda in Iraq organisation is still active, particularly in the north, but they strike throughout the country."

He also said that the US plans to remain involved in mediating disputes between Iraqi Arabs and Kurds, especially in the disputed northern province of Kirkuk, which the autonomous Kurdistan

region wants to incorporate, against Baghdad's wishes.

"To the extent the two Iraqi sides want to continue that, and we will certainly be recommending that they continue that, we're willing to play the coordinating and liaison and advisory role that we have played in the past," he said.

US-led forces toppled Iraqi dictator Saddam Hussein in 2003 and faced a subsequent insurgency. The Iraq war has left thousands of American soldiers and tens of thousands of Iraqis dead, and cost hundreds of billions of dollars.

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