



Written by [Jack Kenny](#) on December 10, 2012

U.S. Troops Are Reported Back in Iraq Over Syrian Crisis

More than 3,000 U.S. military personnel have secretly returned to Iraq via Kuwait and 17,000 more are on their way in response to the civil war in Syria that has spilled over into northern Iraq, according to a [report](#) published Monday by Iran's Press TV. [Update: On December 14, U.S. Central Command spokesman Lt. Col. T.G. Taylor said in an email to *The New American*, "All reports of 3,000 troops returning to Iraq are completely false."]



The news follows by four days a [report](#) from the Russian news service RT that the aircraft carrier *USS Eisenhower* has joined the *USS Iwo Jima* off the coast of Syria. Both President Obama and Secretary of State Hillary Clinton last week issued stern warnings to Syria about unspecified but serious "consequences" that would follow if government forces in Syria were to use chemical weapons against insurgents fighting to overthrow the government led by President Bashar al-Assad. The warnings came after reports that intelligence sources have reported signs of activity where the Assad regime is believed to have chemical weapons stored. At the same time, U.S. officials have [expressed](#) concern over the possibility that Jihadist elements among the rebel forces might capture those same weapons. Israel is worried — along with Western nations — that the militant Islamic group Hezbollah, an ally of Iran and enemy of Israel, might be among the rebels likely to get hold of and use chemical weapons.

The United States and other nations wanting to help the Syrian rebels in their efforts to topple the Assad regime are also concerned about Nusra Front, the one Syrian rebel group with the explicit "stamp of approval from al Qaeda," according to a *New York Times* [report](#) that identified the group as "a direct offshoot of Al Qaeda in Iraq." A veteran of the al-Qaeda force in Iraq, who said he has led the Nusra Front's efforts in Syria, is quoted in the *Times* as saying: "This is just a simple way of returning the favor to our Syrian brothers that fought with us on the lands of Iraq."

Faisal al-Maqdad, Syria's deputy foreign minister, [denied](#) last week that his government has chemical weapons and called the warnings a "pretext for invasion" of Syria by Western nations. "Syria stresses again, for the tenth, the hundredth time, that if we had such weapons, they would not be used against its people. We would not commit suicide," Maqdad, said in apparent recognition of the retaliation by outside forces that the use of such weapons would bring.

Without citing specific numbers of troops on the U.S. ships off the Syrian coast, RT reported that the *Eisenhower* is equipped to carry eight fighter-bombers and 8,000 men, while the *Iwo Jima* is designed to carry 2,500 U.S. Marines. RT last week also quoted an Australian news report of U.S. covert forces either in or very near Syria, ready to strike. "We have (US) special operations forces at the right posture, they don't have to be sent," an unnamed U.S. official told *The Australian*.

Germany's cabinet, meanwhile, has approved stationing Patriot anti-missile batteries on Turkey's border with Syria, a step requiring deployment of NATO troops and arousing fears by the Assad regime that the move is a prelude to an imposition of a no-fly zone in Syria to protect the rebels from aerial bombardment by government forces.



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There has been no United Nations resolution authorizing the establishment of either a no-fly zone or of U.S. ground forces. More importantly for the United States, there has been no authorization from Congress, as the Constitution requires, for the Obama administration to intervene militarily in the Syrian conflict. There is, however, a long line of precedents of presidents waging war without congressional approval, including the aerial campaign ordered by President Obama in 2011 in a “humanitarian intervention” to save the rebel forces that toppled the Moammar Gadhafi regime in Libya. Anti-Western, militant Islamic groups involved in the fighting against Gadhafi’s forces later participated in the September 11, 2012 attack on the U.S. diplomatic outpost in Benghazi that killed four Americans, including U.S. Ambassador to Libya Christopher Stevens.

Photo of U.S. and Iraqi soldiers patrolling in Iraq, 2009



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