

## Coalition forces lose control in Iraq

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Theme: [US NATO War Agenda](#)

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Coalition forces are losing control of the situation in Iraq, reports of the past few days say.

The end of last week saw fierce clashes between the US-backed Iraqi army and militants of the Shiite Mehdi Army.

At least 25 people were killed and more than 100 were injured.

The Americans have suffered big losses too. On Sunday three US servicemen were killed and more than 30 were left wounded in a fire opened on the heavily fortified green zone in Baghdad and the Rustamia military base.

And reports say several hundred people died in clashes in the southern city of Basra.

The leader of the Mehdi Army, Imam Moqtada al-Sadr, has called on his followers to stage a protest rally against foreign forces.

The protest action, set for April 9th, the fifth anniversary of the US capture of Baghdad, should bring together about one million people. It's time, al-Sadr's statement said, to raise a voice against the foreign troops responsible for the horrendous murder of Iraqi people.

The latest developments in Iraq cast doubt on the conclusions of an American intelligence report to the US Congress whose authors argue that security situation in the Gulf has seen radical improvement in the past nine months.

The report has been submitted to Congress in the run-up to the address by the US Commander in Iraq General David Petraeus and the US Ambassador in Baghdad Ryan Crocker, who are expected to pronounce their judgments on the reduction of US military presence in Iraq.

But given the situation, a reduction will be a token one, since last year saw an increase by 30 thousand.

Nevertheless, the expediency of US further presence in Iraq is still on the agenda. Political analyst Vitaly Naumkin comments.

The dilemma is whether to stay or leave, he says.

If the Americans choose to stay, then they'll have to decide whether to move their forces to the bases to avoid any clashes with the insurgents or delegate this to the Iraqis. And if they choose to leave, they'll have to decide how and when.

These are the issues to be handled by the new US administration, since the current one looks unprepared to do so.

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