

Strained US-Iraq Relations: Pompeo Considers Baghdad Embassy Pullout “Permanent”: Officials

By [Bas News](#)

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US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo is not willing to send back the diplomats to the country's embassy in Baghdad after they were evacuated earlier this year in May, according to several State Department officials.

The evacuation came after tensions between Iran and US escalated in the Gulf, at the result of which Washington said its forces, diplomats, and citizens were under threat of being targeted by Iran or Iranian-backed militias in Iraq.

According to several officials who spoke to Foreign Policy on Friday, the staffing levels at the Baghdad embassy reached after the evacuation in May are being treated as a de facto permanent cap on State Department personnel in Iraq.

“They’ve already quietly made the policy decision that they’re not sending these people back,” a senior State Department official familiar with internal deliberations told Foreign Policy. “But they’re not actually calling it a drawdown, they’re just saying they’re reviewing the ordered departure.”

Another State Department official, who has been impacted by the decision, said it felt like the State Department was “abandoning Iraq”, Foreign Policy reported.

The State Department officials say many of the personnel forced to evacuate are now effectively in limbo, some sitting in hotels or Airbnbs in Washington area.

Some officials who were nearing the end of their duty in Iraq when the order to evacuate came, now have their next assignments.

Others, either those who just started their office duty in Iraq or were about to go, are in limbo and are “effectively unemployed employees at this point,” as one State Department official put it.

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