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**Iraqi Militias Blame US for Sabotaging Tikrit Offensive**

27/03/2015



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According to Shiite militia leaders, the pullback of militiamen will severely compromise the broader military operation which aims at ousting the Islamic State group from Iraq's second largest city, Mosul.

U.S. officials revealed Thursday that the airstrikes conducted Wednesday were subjected to a series of conditions imposed by the Pentagon.

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Austin was appointed to answer questions during a Senate Armed Services Committee budget hearing.

So far, the operation launched by the Iraqi military together with Shiite and Kurdish militias has almost recovered control over the embattled city of Tikrit.

Furthermore, Shiite militiamen make up two thirds of all the fighters involved in the operation. According to the U.S. General, no Shiite militias were left in the city.

“We were surprised by the government's decision to request the invading U.S. forces' support in the battle against Daesh (an Arab acronym for IS), which was being defeated and forced to flee by the blows of our heroes,” a statement issued by the Sarayat as-Salam militia — one of the biggest — said.

Sources on the ground claim the militia groups had scheduled a meeting to decide whether or not they will pull back from the city.

Washington conditioned airstrikes in exchange for the Iraqi government to pull back militias. The Shiite pro-government militias fighting in Iraq blamed the United States Thursday of sabotaging the military offensive to retake the city of Tikrit. According to Shiite militia leaders, the pullback of militiamen will severely compromise the broader military operation which aims at ousting the Islamic State group from Iraq's second largest city, Mosul. U.S. officials revealed Thursday that the airstrikes conducted Wednesday were subjected to a series of conditions imposed by the Pentagon. “Once those conditions were met, which included Shiite militias not being involved (in the operation), then we were able to proceed,” explained General Lloyd J. Austin, commander of the U.S. Central Command. Austin was appointed to answer questions during a Senate Armed Services Committee budget hearing. So far, the operation launched by the Iraqi military together with Shiite and Kurdish militias has almost recovered control over the embattled city of Tikrit. Furthermore, Shiite militiamen make up two thirds of all the fighters involved in the operation. According to the U.S. General, no Shiite militias were left in the city. “We were surprised by the government's decision to request the invading U.S. forces' support in the battle against Daesh (an Arab acronym for IS), which was being defeated and forced to flee by the blows of our heroes,” a statement issued by the Sarayat as-Salam militia — one of the biggest — said. Sources on the ground claim the militia groups had scheduled a meeting to decide whether or not they will pull back from the city.

This content was originally published by teleSUR at the following address:

<http://www.telesurtv.net/english/news/Iraqi-Militias-Blame-US-for-Sabotaging-Tikrit-Offensive-20150326-0043.html>.

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