

RELEASE IN FULL

From: Sullivan, Jacob J <SullivanJJ@state.gov>
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Here it is from last July - they actually provided the translation in their English service.

<http://english.farsnews.com/newstext.php?nn=9004203813>
US Official: No Tangible Evidence at Hand to Prove Iran's Aid to Iraqi Militants

TEHRAN (FNA)- A senior US State Department official confessed that Washington has no proof to substantiate its allegations about Iran's arms shipment to militant groups in Iraq.

Speaking to FNA in Iraq's Northern Kurdish city of Erbil on Monday, US Deputy Secretary of State for Management and Resources Thomas Nides repeated his country's earlier claims against Iran, but admitted that the US has no "strong and tangible evidence" to prove the claim.

He said "the US is well aware of Tehran's financial and military assistance with US foes in Iraq", but it does not have any proof or document to corroborate its allegations.

Asked to explain the US logic behind such claims, the senior US administration official said, "We are sure that Iran helps the militants, but our knowledge is based on information that cannot be presented or released.

"That is to say, there is no proof since it is just intelligence (information)," Nides added.

Nides was in Erbil to participate in a ceremony to open the US first consulate in Iraq's Kurdistan region.

The remarks by Nides came as US Defense Secretary Leon Panetta told a small group of soldiers on his first visit to Iraq as Pentagon chief on Monday that Washington is concerned about Iran providing weapons to Iraq militants.

The allegation was first raised by the Chairman of the US Joint Chiefs of Staff, Admiral Mike Mullen.

Tehran has strongly rejected the allegations, saying that the US is trying to project the blame for insecurities and killing of its troops in Iraq on other actors.

"These comments are repetitious and display the United States' trouble in earning the attention of the Iraqi parliament and government for extending its presence in Iraq," Iran's Envoy to Baghdad Hassan Danayefar said yesterday.

"These remarks are a lie and aim to put the blame on the other countries," he added.

The Iranian envoy stated that "Americans are seeking an excuse to implement their Iranophobia plans and stir doubt and anxiety among Iraqi politicians and statesmen. They want to pretend that Iraq would be threatened by Iran, if Americans leave Iraq".

The US signed an agreement with Baghdad at the end of November 2008 on withdrawing all its troops from Iraq by December 31, 2011 as a deadline.

But Washington officials have recently pressed senior Iraqi officials to revise their decision on the US pullout and demand Washington to keep its troops in the country beyond their scheduled departure in the yearend.

Iraqi state officials as well as religious and political figures have all condemned the US attempts for extending the mission of its troops in the country.

Iraq's Government Spokesman Ali al-Dabbagh categorically denied speculations that Baghdad is going to strike a deal with Washington to extend the presence of the US troops in Iraq beyond the 2011 deadline.

"The report is a sheer lie since no action has been taken in this regard and the government of Iraq hasn't signed such a deal with the US," Dabbagh told FNA in Baghdad last month.