

Pentagon: US plans to set up more bases in Iraq

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JPNN/Washington/June 12, 2015 /The United States is considering setting up additional bases in Iraq similar to a new hub planned in Anbar province to help Iraqi forces battle the self-styled Islamic State, the Pentagon said on Thursday. Establishing more bases to get US military advisers closer to the battlefield would likely require yet more American troops to deploy to Iraq beyond the 450 reinforcements announced by the White House on Wednesday. The Pentagon raised the possibility of more bases a day after President Barack Obama's administration unveiled plans to send dozens of advisers to Anbar to help Iraqi forces eventually recapture Ramadi, which fell to the IS jihadists last month. The advisers and other US troops headed to Anbar will operate out of Taqaddum Air Base, which is located only 37 kilometres from Ramadi. Pentagon spokesman Colonel Steven Warren told reporters that the new hub at Taqaddum could be the first of a number of new bases across the country for US military advisers, depending on how things turn out in the battle to retake Ramadi. "What we're doing in Al-Taqaddum is something we're considering doing elsewhere," Warren said. Asked how many new bases might be set up, Warren said: "Several I would think". Establishing new bases for advisers might mean more troops ordered to Iraq but "not necessarily," Warren said, because forces already on the ground could be shifted to the forward bases. Prospective sites for new bases were already being looked at, but much would hinge on the results of the advisory effort at Taqaddum, he said. "We are actively considering where we can establish other (bases)," he said. "At the same time, our thought process will be informed by what happens at al-Taqaddum". The US military's top officer, General Martin Dempsey, told reporters on Thursday during a trip to Europe that if the advisory mission in Anbar proved successful, more such bases could be set up. Dempsey compared the base at Taqaddum to a "lily pad" that would allow the US "to encourage the Iraqi security forces forward". "As they go forward, they may exceed the reach of the particular lily pad. We're looking all the time to see if additional sites might be necessary," said.—AFP Dempsey, according to an account posted on the Defence Department website. The general, chairman of the Joint Chiefs of staff, said he did not anticipate the need for another base in Anbar province but "I could foresee one in the corridor that runs from Baghdad to Tikrit to Kirkuk over into Mosul". The White House played down the military's talk of new bases. AFP