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Sadr Rejects Extension: US ‘Trainers’ in Iraq Will Be Targets

By Jason Ditz

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Though the Iraqi government looks to be [slowly but surely backing off](#) on the December deadline for the US troops to leave Iraq, top cleric and key political leader Moqtada al-Sadr has not, and is ratcheting up threats about the possible remnant forces.



Sadr is now saying that any [US troops remaining in the country after December](#), including “trainers” will be treated as “invaders” and will be considered fair targets for attack. Sadr added that the Iraqi government that would allow them to stay “[even for training is a weak government.](#)”

Though the comments are likely to fuel more US condemnation of the Sadrist Trend, they are likely more aimed at Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki, who has recently been seen trying to spin US military trainers as something short of “troops” and [insisting he doesn't need parliament's approval for trainers.](#)

There seems to be precedent for the US using this sort of semantics to get around the letter and spirit of the law, particularly in Iraq. Last year the US announced all “combat troops” had left Iraq, even though the troops still there continue to this day to engage in combat operations, simply by officially renaming them “non-combat troops.” Doing so may work for press releases, but doesn't appear likely to convince the Iraqis opposed to a continued US presence, particularly when [US forces are launching unilateral attacks in recent days.](#)