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'US casualties in Iraq exceed 50,000'

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Despite US efforts to impose an information blackout on its war casualties, the number of US troops killed and wounded in Iraq has surpassed 50,000, a senior Iranian commander says.

“Based on the existing figures and data, the American forces killed and injured in Iraq are estimated to be 50,000. However, it seems that the real statistics are much higher than this,” said Brigadier General Massoud Jazayeri, the deputy head of Iran's Armed Forces Joint Chiefs of Staff, on Friday.

“Of course the figure 50,000 killed and wounded Americans, is notwithstanding the mercenaries of other nationalities who are in the US Army fighting against the people of Iraq,” the Iranian commander added.

Jazayeri made reference to the enormous cost of maintaining US military presence in Iraq and Afghanistan, and argued that the American taxpayers are rarely aware of the undeniable fact that the cost of the Iraq war is at least USD 1,000 billion.

“Of course some sources have estimated the cost of war [in Iraq] to be more than USD 3,000 billion and with careful calculation this figure will rise even higher,” he added.

There are currently about 39,000 US soldiers in Iraq. According to a 2008 bilateral security

accord, known as the Status of Forces Agreement (SOFA), all the US troops are required to leave the country by the end of this year.

Under pressure from Washington, Iraqi political leaders recently agreed to allow some US forces to stay longer for 'training' purposes, but refused to grant them immunity from prosecution.

Iraqi Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki has also rejected the US proposal that 3,400 of the troops remain in the country, saying “we do not need such a large number.”

Over one million Iraqis have been killed in the US-led invasion and occupation of the country since 2003, according to the California-based investigative organization Project Censored.