

A secret deal being negotiated in Baghdad would perpetuate the American military occupation of Iraq indefinitely, regardless of the outcome of the US presidential election in November.

The terms of the impending deal, details of which have been leaked to The Independent, are likely to have an explosive political effect in Iraq. Iraqi officials fear that the accord, under which US troops would occupy permanent bases, conduct military operations, arrest Iraqis and enjoy immunity from Iraqi law, will destabilise Iraq's position in the Middle East and lay the basis for unending conflict in their country.

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