

US admits it should have acted faster against IS in Iraq

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Washington: US Defence Secretary Ashton Carter admitted that they did not act fast enough to prepare Iraqi forces for the threat posed by the Islamic State militant group.

"We ... determined that our equipping of the Iraqi security forces had proceeded too slowly," Carter said in a hearing of the House Armed Services Committee on Wednesday.

In addition, the defence chief said that Iraq is having problems recruiting new members of the Iraqi security forces, who are being trained and strengthening the country's ability to fight the IS.

The Pentagon, he said, has decided to accelerate the shipment of anti-tank weapons and other types of military equipment to the Iraqi forces, including the militias created by the Sunni and Kurdish minorities.

The Pentagon chief significantly lowered the number of Iraqi soldiers to be trained from the initial figure of 24,000 to 7,000.

The US feels that the inability of the Shi'ite-led government in Baghdad to maintain a religiously, and ethnically-diversified armed forces and to work for the inclusion of the Sunni and Kurdish minorities is the root cause of the flight of the army before the IS advance toward Mosul last summer.

Meanwhile, the head of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, General Martin Dempsey, said he was against sending US combat troops to Iraq, as some Republican senators have proposed with an eye toward putting the IS on the run.

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