

US stands with Iraqi people decision despite Sadr win

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US Secretary of Defense James N. Mattis told reporters on Tuesday that the US would respect the outcome of the Iraqi election, although Muqtada al Sadr's list opposes the US presence in Iraq, and even fought US troops in Iraq until he disbanded it's militia in 2008.

"The Iraqi people had an election. That's a democratic process at a time when people -- many people doubted that Iraq can take charge of themselves. So we will wait and see the results -- the final results of the election. But we stand with the Iraqi people's decision," Mattis said.

Moreover, two of the leading party lists, Sadr's list, and the Conquest alliance consisting of the Iran-backed Popular Mobilization Units (PMU) oppose a US presence in Iraq. This unlike Iraqi PM's Abadi list, that came third, and was the favorite candidate for the United States.

"We are very well aware of Moqtada al-Sadr and his background and his positions

now, yes,” Heather Nauert, the US State Department spokesperson said on Tuesday. Many Iraq experts predicted a win for Abadi.

“Also, remember Kirkuk? Support for PM Abadi against Erbil at the time was largely because officials and pundits wanted to pick a side, as they saw in Abadi the change they hoped for. America’s natural allies are all weakened, at once. And, yes, the US has itself to blame. You can’t grasp how embarrassing this is for the US policymakers without remembering the Kirkuk showdown and the Abadi-PMFs episode,” Hassan Hassan, a senior fellow Tahrir Institute for Middle East Policy in Washington, wrote on his Twitter account.

“For months, every single Iraq analyst or US official (I’m aware of their views) took Abadi’s victory for granted,” he added.

However, the US government say it’s still unclear which coalition government will rule Iraq, while both the Iranian spy chief Qassim Soleimani, and US coalition envoy Brett McGurk are in Iraq, attempting to influence the Iraqi government formation.

“Iraq is still finalizing its election results right now. They’re likely to have to form some sort of coalition government, so I don’t want to get ahead of the process and presume how things are going to look in the end. But I think the overarching theme right now is congratulations to Iraq for holding democratic and free elections,” she concluded.