

U.S.-Iran security talks postponed indefinitely, Iraq reports

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BAGHDAD: The Iraqi foreign minister said Wednesday that security talks between Iran and the United States had been indefinitely postponed because of an "exchange of accusations" between the sides.

As Washington escalated its accusation of Iranian backing for extremists, Tehran on Monday called off further Iraq security talks with the United States until American forces stopped their crackdown on Shiite militias. U.S.-led forces have been engaging in fierce street battles in Sadr City, a Shiite militia stronghold in Baghdad.

"It is impossible to hold a new round because of exchange of accusations between the two sides," Foreign Minister Hoshyar Zebari told a news conference Wednesday in Baghdad. "The negotiations are postponed indefinitely because of tense atmosphere."

"We had three important rounds, but they yielded no fast results," said Zebari, adding that Iraq's efforts to hold the next round of talks had failed.

U.S.-led forces are fighting Shiite extremists as well as Sunni insurgents from Al Qaeda in Mesopotamia, a largely Iraqi group with some foreign leaders. One U.S. soldier was killed in a clash on Tuesday in the former Sunni insurgent stronghold of Anbar Province, the military announced Wednesday.

The clashes in the Sadr City district erupted after an Iraqi government crackdown on armed Shiite groups began in late March. The U.S. military is now trying to weaken the militia grip in the teeming slum neighborhood and disrupt rocket and mortar strikes on the U.S.-protected Green Zone.

Ex-detainee linked to attack

The U.S. military said Wednesday that a former Guantánamo detainee from Kuwait carried out a recent suicide attack in northern Iraq, The Associated Press reported from San Juan, Puerto Rico.

A spokesman for the U.S. military's Central Command said the Kuwaiti, Abdallah Salih al-Ajmi, took part in an attack in Mosul.

Commander Scott Rye of the U.S. Navy said the authorities did not know the motive for the attack, which was reported last week by the Dubai-based Al-Arabiya television. Iraqi security forces were apparently targeted.

The U.S. military transferred Ajmi to Kuwaiti custody in 2005. A Kuwaiti court later acquitted him of terrorism charges.