

Gates: Troop drawdowns based on much input

by UPI

WASHINGTON - U.S. Defense Secretary Robert Gates said Thursday he hasn't discussed with the top military commander in Iraq any plans for a "pause" in troop reductions. During a news conference with French Defense Minister Herve Morin, Gates said he and Army Gen. David H. Petraeus haven't discussed a plan temporarily freeze temporarily the drawdown beginning this summer once the 15 brigades that were part of the surge in 2007 have been redeployed without being replaced. Petraeus told CNN this week he favored having "some time to let things settle a bit" before deciding whether additional troop reductions would be made. Petraeus is expected to provide his recommendation for troop numbers in Iraq within a few months. "The guidance I have provided to him is, he should make his evaluation and recommendations based solely on the conditions on the ground in Iraq," Gates said during the news conference. Besides Petraeus' recommendations, Gates said options from several sources -- including himself, the Joint Chiefs of Staff and Navy Adm. William J. Fallon, the U.S. Central Command chief -- would be presented to U.S. President George W. Bush for consideration.

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