

Steady level of troops in Iraq plan aired

by UPI

WASHINGTON - President George Bush was told U.S. troop levels in Iraq would stay the same in 2008 as any other time during the five-year-old war, military officials said. Bush didn't announce a final decision on future troop levels after his video conference with Gen. David Petraeus, commander of U.S. troops in Iraq, and Ryan Crocker, U.S. Ambassador to Iraq. However, the recommendation is any major U.S. troop reductions would be left to the next president, The New York Times reported Tuesday. Petraeus recommended delaying reductions for several months after the the last of the extra brigades sent as part of the surge leave in July, unnamed military officials told the Times. Petraeus recommended more frequent reviews, perhaps monthly, to determine when withdrawals might resume, the Times said. The more frequent reviews also are advocated by the Joint Chiefs of Staff and by the Central Command. Democratic presidential hopefuls Sens. Hillary Clinton of New York and Barack Obama of Illinois have proposed rapid withdrawals of troops. Sen. John McCain of Arizona, the presumptive Republican nominee, advocates a policy similar to Bush's. The Joint Chiefs brief Bush this week. Petraeus and Crocker will testify before Congress next month.

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