

U.S. release of Iranians likely by June

by UPI

BAGHDAD - Iraqi Foreign Minister Hoshyar Zebari says the United States has until June to release five Iranians it captured in northern Iraq in January.

The Iranians were captured in a surprise U.S. raid on an Iranian office in the Kurdish city of Irbil Jan. 11, although they were not the intended targets, The Independent (Britain) reported. The two men wanted by the U.S. military were elsewhere, but their official vehicles were parked in front of the building.

Zebari said under an agreement governing such detentions, the United States can detain them for 90 days, which is renewable once, and then either charge them, hand them over to Iraqi authorities or release them.

The abductions further chilled relations between Washington and Tehran, and Zebari said the two countries must come to realize they are each "players (in Iraq) whether we want it or not."

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