

Report: White House debates Iraq pullout

by UPI

WASHINGTON - Debate is growing in the White House on whether President George W. Bush should announce a pullout of U.S. troops from parts of Iraq, The New York Times said.

The debate is driven in part by fear that Bush's Iraq strategy is losing what support remains among Senate Republicans, the Times said, citing administration officials.

The debate concerns whether Bush should try to prevent further defections in Congress by announcing his intention to begin a gradual withdrawal of troops from parts of Baghdad and other cities, the newspaper reported.

The White House had not expected to take up that question until September, when the top U.S. commander in Iraq, Army Gen. David Petraeus, and the U.S. ambassador to Iraq are to report on the results of the troop buildup Bush ordered this year.

Some Bush aides said the White House strategy seems to be losing political support just as the Senate is set to begin debate on a series of measures designed to pressure Republicans to abandon Bush on Iraq.

"When you count up the votes that we've lost and the votes we're likely to lose over the next few weeks, it looks pretty grim," a senior White House official told the newspaper.

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