

Iraq and the United States have finally agreed on a security pact which would mean that US forces would withdraw from Iraq by 2011, American and Iraqi officials said yesterday.

The agreement still needs to be approved by the council of Iraqi leaders, the cabinet and the Iraqi parliament. Mr Maliki saw the highly influential Shia religious leader, the Grand Ayatollah Ali al-Sistani, last week and was assured that he would not stand in the way of the pact if approved by parliament.

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