

## **Obama: Additional US forces to help 'squeeze' Islamic State**

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**Susan Heavey, Reuters**

President Barack Obama said his decision to send more US special forces to combat the Islamic State in Iraq is not an indication that the United States is headed for another invasion, like the one in 2003 that locked it in a long, violent conflict.

Obama has said his strategy to fight the militant group in Iraq and Syria does not include US ground combat troops, but this week, the Pentagon announced it would send a new force of special operations troops.

"When I said no boots on the ground, I think the American people understood generally that we're not going to do an Iraq-style invasion of Iraq or Syria with battalions that are moving across the desert," he said in an interview with CBS that aired in the US yesterday (today in Malaysia).

"But what I've been very clear about is that we are going to systematically squeeze and ultimately destroy ISIL and that requires us having a military component to that," Obama (photo) added, using a common acronym for the militants. The interview was taped on Wednesday.

On Wednesday, US Army Colonel Steve Warren said the new force would likely amount to 100, an increase over the 50 announced previously.

The addition is the latest effort to boost US military pressure against Islamic State while also exposing American forces to greater risk.

### **'Deployment will be a hostile act'**

Iraqi Prime Minister Haider al-Abadi said yesterday no foreign ground troops had been requested from any country and that their deployment would be considered a "hostile act".

The statement on Abadi's official Facebook page came after Col Warren said a new force of around 100 special operations troops would be deployed to assist in the military campaign against Islamic State militants in Iraq.

Obama has only sparingly moved to expose US troops to greater risk in Iraq and Syria, even as he faces ongoing criticism from Republicans on his strategy to combat the militants.

Some have called for thousands of additional troops to be deployed to the region, where Islamic State militants control wide swaths of territory.

The Obama administration also faces increasing pressure to act following the Nov 13 Paris attacks that have raised fears over security in Western nations and prompted France,

Britain and Germany to boost their role in the US-led coalition fighting the Islamic State.

In the interview, Obama acknowledged that US special forces alone would not be able to destroy the militant group but said they could provide additional intelligence, work with local forces and help direct air strikes.

"We are developing partnerships, although they are not strong as we want yet, with local tribes and Sunnis who are willing to fight ISIS," he told CBS.

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