



OPERATION INHERENT RESOLVE

LEAD INSPECTOR GENERAL REPORT TO THE UNITED STATES CONGRESS



APRIL 1, 2021-JUNE 30, 2021

ABOUT THIS REPORT

A 2013 amendment to the Inspector General Act established the Lead Inspector General (Lead IG) framework for oversight of overseas contingency operations and requires that the Lead IG submit quarterly reports to Congress on each active operation. The Chair of the Council of Inspectors General for Integrity and Efficiency designated the DoD Inspector General (IG) as the Lead IG for Operation Inherent Resolve (OIR). The DoS IG is the Associate IG for the operation. The USAID IG participates in oversight of the operation.

The Offices of Inspector General (OIG) of the DoD, the DoS, and USAID are referred to in this report as the Lead IG agencies. Other partner agencies also contribute to oversight of OIR.

The Lead IG agencies collectively carry out the Lead IG statutory responsibilities to:

- Develop a joint strategic plan to conduct comprehensive oversight of the operation.
- Ensure independent and effective oversight of programs and operations of the U.S. Government in support of the operation through either joint or individual audits, inspections, investigations, or evaluations.
- Report quarterly to Congress and the public on the operation and on activities of the Lead IG agencies.

METHODOLOGY

To produce this quarterly report, the Lead IG agencies submit requests for information to the DoD, the DoS, USAID, and other Federal agencies about OIR and related programs. The Lead IG agencies also gather data and information from other sources, including official documents, congressional testimony, policy research organizations, and press conferences, think tanks, and media reports.

The sources of information contained in this report are listed in endnotes or notes to tables and figures. Except in the case of audits, inspections, investigations, or evaluations referenced in this report, the Lead IG agencies have not audited the data and information cited in this report. The DoD, the DoS, and USAID vet the reports for accuracy prior to publication. For further details on the methodology for this report, see Appendix B.

CLASSIFIED APPENDIX

A classified appendix to this report provides additional information on Operation Inherent Resolve. This quarter's classified appendix will be delivered to relevant agencies and congressional committees. Due to the coronavirus disease-2019 (COVID-19) pandemic, the DoS and USAID OIGs did not provide information for or participate in the preparation of the classified appendix this quarter.

FOREWORD

We are pleased to submit this Lead Inspector General (Lead IG) quarterly report on OIR to the U.S. Congress. This report discharges our individual and collective agency oversight responsibilities pursuant to the Inspector General Act of 1978.

The United States launched OIR in 2014 to defeat the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS), while setting the conditions for follow-on activities to increase regional stability. The U.S. Government strategy to defeat ISIS includes military operations, as well as support for local security forces, diplomacy, governance, humanitarian assistance, and stabilization programs.

This quarterly report describes the activities of the U.S. Government in support of OIR, as well as the work of the Department of Defense, the Department of State, and the U.S. Agency for International Development to promote the U.S. Government's policy goals in Iraq and Syria, during the period of April 1, 2021, through June 30, 2021.

This report also discusses the planned, ongoing, and completed oversight work conducted by the Lead IG agencies and our partner oversight agencies during the quarter. During the quarter, the Lead IG agencies and our oversight partners issued 10 audit, evaluation, and inspection reports related to OIR.

Working in close collaboration, we remain committed to providing comprehensive oversight of and timely reporting on Operation Inherent Resolve.



Handwritten signature of Sean W. O'Donnell in black ink.

Sean W. O'Donnell
Acting Inspector General
U.S. Department of Defense



Handwritten signature of Diana Shaw in black ink.

Diana Shaw
Acting Inspector General
U.S. Department of State



Handwritten signature of Thomas J. Ullom in black ink.

Thomas J. Ullom
Acting Inspector General
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Development



On the Cover

(Top row): Members of the all-female Yazidi Company of the Kurdish Security Forces participate in various training activities at the Zeravani Tigers Training Center, Erbil, Iraq (U.S. Army photo); U.S. Army Soldiers conduct training on a M777 Howitzer in Syria (U.S. Army photo); Parcels of non-food items are distributed to families across Baghdad, Ninewa, Anbar, Salah ad Din, and Diyala provinces (USAID photo); The Prime Minister of the Republic of Iraq, Mustafa al-Kadhimi, meets with NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg (NATO photo). (Bottom row): U.S. Army Soldiers evaluate local conditions in a Syrian village (U.S. Army photo).

MESSAGE FROM THE LEAD INSPECTOR GENERAL



Sean W. O'Donnell

I am pleased to present this Lead IG quarterly report on Operation Inherent Resolve (OIR). The U.S. Government continued to make incremental progress toward its goal of preventing ISIS from regenerating in Iraq and Syria. However, Coalition partners in Iraq and Syria continued to rely on Coalition support to conduct operations, and ISIS remained entrenched as a low-level insurgency. At the end of the quarter, foreign ministers of the 83-member Coalition met and reaffirmed their shared fight against ISIS. Prior to publishing this report, President Biden issued a statement with the Iraqi Prime Minister on their shared commitment to strengthening the U.S.–Iraq partnership.

ISIS attacks increased compared to the previous quarter, particularly during Ramadan. In Iraq, the Iraqi Security Forces (ISF) and Kurdish Peshmerga conducted their first joint operation in a disputed area that ISIS uses for operations and smuggling routes—a milestone in the ability of the two forces to fight ISIS together. However, the ISF still has “limited ability” to secure its border with Syria and conduct nighttime operations. In Syria, ISIS continued attacks despite pressure from Coalition partners, the Syrian regime, and Russia. In April, the Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) completed a security sweep at the al-Hol displaced persons camp, which led to reduced ISIS violence. However, the reduction in violence may only be temporary.

U.S. Central Command (USCENTCOM) reported that ISIS retained a “strong presence” in the camp during the quarter and media sources reported that ISIS violence in al-Hol rose in June.

Iran-aligned militias continued to threaten the progress of the OIR mission during the quarter. The militias attacked U.S. facilities in Iraq using unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs)—a new capability, according to USCENTCOM—and also conducted attacks on Coalition forces in Syria. Combined Joint Task Force–Operation Inherent Resolve (CJTF-OIR) said that the overall impact of militia activities on the OIR campaign has so far been “minimal,” but the attacks often resulted in the diversion of intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance (ISR) assets away from counter-ISIS activities. In addition, Mission Iraq staff in Baghdad remained under an ordered departure, due in part to the militia attacks as well as the coronavirus-2019 (COVID-19) pandemic. The U.S. Embassy in Baghdad reported that while it continued to fulfill its mission, the reduced staffing negatively affected morale and services.

During the quarter, U.S. Government efforts to promote regional stability in Iraq and Syria continued to face challenging conditions, including economic crises, drought conditions, and the COVID-19 pandemic. These conditions contribute to instability and suffering, and provide fertile opportunities for ISIS to expand its influence. In Iraq, the Iraqi government and the international community still plan to hold elections in October, although several political parties withdrew from the election process. In Syria, efforts to negotiate a political solution to the civil conflict remained stalled. Efforts to repatriate residents of displaced persons camps in Syria continued, including the repatriation of 93 Iraqi families from the al-Hol camp. As the quarter ended, a delegation of U.S. officials visited the al-Hol camp and met with humanitarian assistance groups and camp administration.

We will continue to report on the status of OIR, including the counter-ISIS mission, the effects of malign actors on the mission, and U.S. Government efforts to address the underlying factors that influence stability in Iraq and Syria. I look forward to working with my Lead IG colleagues to continue to provide oversight of and report on OIR, as required by the IG Act.

Sean W. O'Donnell
Acting Inspector General
U.S. Department of Defense



Spc Trevor Franklin



U.S. Army Soldiers conduct training on a M777 Howitzer in Syria. (U.S. Army photo)

CONTENTS

April 1, 2021–June 30, 2021

2 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

9 STATUS OF OIR

- 12 Status of ISIS
- 21 Status of Funding
- 24 Status of Personnel

27 IRAQ

- 28 Security
- 47 Politics and Economics
- 55 Stabilization
- 59 Humanitarian Assistance

65 SYRIA

- 66 Security
- 77 Stabilization
- 81 Humanitarian Assistance

89 OVERSIGHT ACTIVITIES

- 90 Strategic Planning
- 92 Audit, Inspection, and Evaluation Activity
- 99 Investigations and Hotline Activity

103 APPENDICES

- 104 Appendix A: Classified Appendix to this Report
- 104 Appendix B: Methodology for Preparing this Lead IG Quarterly Report
- 105 Appendix C: Department of Justice Prosecutions and Activities Against Terrorism
- 107 Appendix D: Department of the Treasury and Department of State Actions Against Terrorist Financing
- 109 Appendix E: Ongoing Oversight Projects
- 111 Appendix F: Planned Oversight Projects
- 113 Acronyms
- 115 Map of Iraq
- 116 Map of Syria
- 117 Endnotes

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Operation Inherent Resolve (OIR) mission is to achieve the defeat of ISIS in Iraq and Syria, while setting the conditions for follow-on activities to improve regional stability.¹ OIR is currently in Phase IV, “Normalize,” the final phase of the OIR campaign plan. During this phase, the Coalition has transitioned from training, developing, and assisting partner forces in Iraq and Syria to advising and enabling them.²

Combined Joint Task Force–OIR (CJTF-OIR), the U.S.-led international Coalition that executes the OIR campaign, reported “satisfactory” progress toward OIR campaign objectives during the quarter.³ CJTF-OIR said that the Coalition and its local partners had “precluded [ISIS] from regenerating” but noted “partner forces remain dependent on Coalition capabilities.”⁴

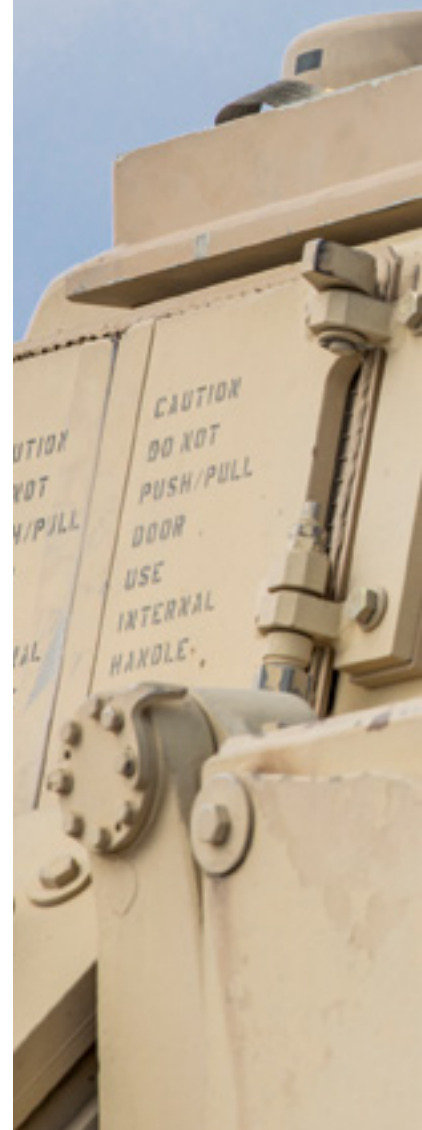
STATUS OF OIR

ISIS continued operating as a “low-level” and “well-entrenched” insurgency in rural areas of Iraq and Syria.⁵ ISIS-claimed attacks increased compared to previous quarters, with a notable rise during Ramadan (April 13 to May 12), consistent with Ramadan attack trends from 2020.⁶ ISIS continued to conduct hit-and-run and improvised explosive device (IED) attacks; exploit sectarian, political and security gaps; and target vulnerable residents of displaced persons camps for recruitment.⁷ In Iraq, ISIS took advantage of the security void between the Iraqi Security Forces (ISF) and the Kurdish Security Forces in the disputed area near the Iraqi Kurdistan Region. ISIS conducted attacks against the ISF and engaged in smuggling in the region.⁸ In Syria, ISIS conducted attacks against the Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) and civilian targets in the Middle Euphrates River Valley, and against Syrian regime forces and their allies in the central Syrian desert.⁹

ISIS-related violence at the al-Hol displaced persons camp decreased following a 5-day sweep by SDF internal security forces at the end of March.¹⁰ The DoS reported that there were 15 killings in al-Hol during the quarter, compared to 45 during the previous quarter.¹¹ U.S. Central Command (USCENTCOM) reported that ISIS retained a “strong” presence amid the approximately 60,000 displaced persons in the humanitarian camp, where more than two thirds of the residents are children.¹² The increase in ISIS-suspected violence in June underscored concerns that the reduction in violence may only be temporary.¹³ During the quarter, the Iraqi government repatriated 93 Iraqi families from al-Hol—the first of among 500 families it has committed to bring home.¹⁴

At the end of the quarter, Acting Special Envoy John T. Godfrey led a delegation of officials to northeast Syria to visit al-Hol camp, where they met with humanitarian assistance groups and camp administration.¹⁵ The purpose of the visit was to build understanding of the challenges that humanitarian assistance groups and local authorities face in providing services and managing al-Hol so that the DoS can better channel assistance and advocacy on this complex issue. After the visit, Acting Special Envoy Godfrey discussed his trip with D-ISIS Coalition partners at the June 28 Ministerial.¹⁶

A U.S. Army Soldier evaluates local conditions in a Syrian village. (U.S. Army photo)





Foreign ministers of the 83-member Global Coalition to Defeat ISIS (D-ISIS Coalition) met in June and reaffirmed their shared fight against ISIS.¹⁷ The ministers discussed the importance of allocating adequate resources to sustain Coalition and legitimate partner forces' efforts, providing significant stabilization support to address “drivers that make communities vulnerable” to recruitment by ISIS and related violent ideological groups, providing support to liberated areas, and safeguarding collective interests.¹⁸

IRAQ

The Iraqi Security Forces (ISF) conducted multiple operations against ISIS. Operations included ground clearance operations, static security operations, helicopter assault force operations, and interdiction operations. CJTF-OIR reported that the ISF's capability to conduct search and clearance operations had “improved” even though it was less active than the previous quarter.¹⁹ CJTF-OIR said that ISF search and clearance operations deterred criminal and illegal activity and demonstrated the ISF's support to local populations.²⁰ However, most ISF operations occurred during the day and ISIS fighters typically operated at night to limit their exposure, CJTF-OIR said.²¹

ISF commanders continued to request Coalition intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance (ISR) support. The ISF conducted airstrikes using its own aerial assets and demonstrated limited ISR capabilities.²² Coalition advisors also provided training to Iraq's Counter Terrorism Service (CTS) that was designed to enhance the CTS's intelligence capabilities, improve coordination between the CTS and other units within the ISF, and develop CTS infantry tactics at the battalion level.²³

The ISF displayed a “limited ability” to secure Iraq's border with Syria. CJTF-OIR reported that the ISF's limitations allowed ISIS fighters and affiliated family members to traverse the border in small groups.²⁴ ISIS family members often establish “bed down locations” and helped move fighters to ISIS's geographic strongholds.²⁵ During the quarter, the Iraqi Army, the SDF, and Coalition forces conducted operations to stem illegal border crossings, according to a media report.²⁶

The ISF and Kurdish military forces conducted a joint operation. Following months of effort, in June the two forces executed a joint operation in an area known as the Kurdistan Coordination Line, a swath of disputed area in northern Iraq claimed by both the Kurdistan Regional Government and the central Iraqi government.²⁷ The operation took place in response to lethal ISIS attacks on the Kurdish Security Forces (also known as the Peshmerga).²⁸ In addition to the joint patrol, the two forces set up four new Joint Coordination Centers in northern Iraqi provinces.²⁹ CJTF-OIR reported that the DoD had resumed paying stipends to the Ministry of Peshmerga Affairs—an effort that was suspended earlier this year—enabling the ministry to distribute back pay owed to the Peshmerga's Regional Guard Brigades.³⁰

Iran-aligned militias conducted their first unmanned aerial vehicle (UAV) attacks against U.S. facilities in Iraq.³¹ USCENTCOM said these attacks represent the use of a new capability against U.S. interests in the region.³² The DIA assessed that Iran probably has expanded the parameters of militia attacks to pressure the Iraqi and U.S. governments to establish a timeline for the withdrawal of U.S. troops.³³

CJTF-OIR reported that the ISF's capability to conduct search and clearance operations had “improved” even though it was less active than the previous quarter.

Lead IG Oversight Activities

Travel restrictions caused by the COVID-19 pandemic continued to constrain the Lead IG agencies' ability to conduct oversight of projects during the quarter. Despite these constraints, the Lead IG agencies completed 10 reports related to OIR. These reports examined various activities that support OIR, including the effectiveness of USCENTCOM's target development and post-strike civilian casualty assessment activities; DoS processes to identify and nominate qualified contract oversight personnel in Iraq; and USAID processes to prevent, detect, and respond to sexual exploitation and abuse allegations. As of June 30, 2021, the Lead IG agencies had 17 OIR-related projects ongoing and 9 projects planned.

During this quarter, Lead IG investigations related to OIR resulted in one sentencing resulting from a USAID OIG investigation. The investigative branches of the Lead IG agencies and their partner agencies closed 17 investigations, initiated 2 investigations, and coordinated on 81 open investigations. The investigations involve grant and procurement fraud, corruption, theft, program irregularities, computer intrusions, and human trafficking.

Each Lead IG agency maintains its own hotline to receive complaints specific to its agency. The hotlines provide a confidential and reliable means for individuals to report violations of law, rule, or regulation; mismanagement; gross waste of funds; and abuse of authority. A DoD OIG investigator coordinates the hotline contacts among Lead IG agencies and others, as appropriate. During the quarter, the investigator referred 51 cases to Lead IG agencies or other investigative organizations.

Despite protests and threat of boycotts, the Iraqi government continued to prepare for elections in October 2021. Iran-aligned militia groups continued to intimidate nationalist political forces to challenge pro-Iran political actors in upcoming elections.³⁴ In May, unknown assailants murdered an activist and anticorruption campaigner, Ehab Jawad al-Wazni, sparking protests throughout Iraq.³⁵ In response to the violence and overall instability, 21 political parties associated with the antigovernment protest movement announced their withdrawal from the elections.³⁶ The U.S. Government continued to provide support for the elections.³⁷

U.S. diplomatic facilities in Baghdad remained under an ordered departure, which has negatively affected services and staff morale. In March 2020, the U.S. Embassy in Baghdad was placed under an ordered departure. In December 2020, the DoS ordered additional staff reductions. Though staffing gradually returned to pre-December 2020 levels during the quarter, the ordered departure is still in effect and the embassy continues to feel the effects of the "cost to employees, efficiency, and oversight."³⁸

SYRIA

The SDF and their Coalition partners continued operations to suppress ISIS and prevent a resurgence.³⁹ CJTF-OIR said that the SDF reduced its pace of operations slightly compared to last quarter due to Ramadan, but continued to plan and conduct unilateral operations to maintain pressure on ISIS and disrupt its smuggling operations.⁴⁰ The SDF's efforts included detention operations, raids on IED facilitation and assassination cells, and large-scale search and clearance operations, as well as conducting daytime patrols



and maintaining traffic control points.⁴¹ CJTF-OIR said its local partners in Syria remain dependent on some Coalition assets.⁴²

Coalition forces continued to train, advise, and enable partner forces in northeastern Syria and at the Tanf Garrison near the border with Iraq and Jordan.⁴³ CJTF-OIR provided equipment to the SDF, including weapons, ammunition, medical supplies, and ISR assets when needed.⁴⁴ The Special Operations Joint Task Force–OIR (SOJTF-OIR) provided riot control, escalation-of-force, biometric enrollment, and public affairs training to the SDF in support of its operations at detention centers and to address ISIS-related violence at the al-Hol camp.⁴⁵ CJTF-OIR also provided tactical training to Mughawir al-Thawra (MaT) partners at the Tanf Garrison, with an increased focus on building technical skills such as maneuver, command and control, and logistics.⁴⁶

The SDF announced that—with Coalition support—it had updated security procedures at a detention facility in Hasakah governorate.⁴⁷ The SDF said that improvements to the facility included structural repairs, security measures, COVID-19 health measures, and a sweep of dormitories for damage or weapons.⁴⁸ CJTF-OIR said the SDF continued to hold approximately 10,000 suspected ISIS fighters at the Hasakah facility and other detention facilities, including approximately 2,000 from countries other than Iraq or Syria.⁴⁹

Iran-backed forces attacked Coalition forces in Syria during the quarter. Media reports said the attack came hours after a U.S. strike targeting Iran-backed militia facilities in western Iraq and eastern Syria on June 27.⁵⁰ An OIR spokesperson said that the perpetrators fired 34 122-millimeter rockets at U.S. forces in Syria, but no U.S. personnel were injured. U.S. forces responded with artillery fire and an airstrike.⁵¹

The DoS and USAID reported that humanitarian assistance implementers faced ongoing challenges in Syria.⁵² Throughout the quarter, humanitarian actors faced uncertainty about the fate of the UN authorization to deliver cross-border assistance via Bab al-Hawa, the only remaining border crossing along the Turkey-Syria border.⁵³ The UN Security Council voted to keep Bab al-Hawa open for 6 months. In addition, USAID said that the persistent economic decline, pandemic-related restrictions on large gatherings, and limited mobility continued to affect the distribution of aid, as did worsening water insecurity in northeastern Syria during the quarter, stemming from factors including low water levels in the Euphrates River.⁵⁴

A U.S. Air Force C-17 Globemaster and a U.S. Marine Corps MV-22 Osprey prepare for take-off at al-Asad Air Base, Iraq. (U.S. Army National Guard)







U.S. Marines visit an SDF training and operations facility in Syria. (U.S. Army photo)

STATUS OF OIR

- 12 Status of ISIS
- 21 Status of Funding
- 24 Status of Personnel



STATUS OF OIR

The Operation Inherent Resolve (OIR) mission is to defeat ISIS in Iraq and Syria, while setting the conditions for follow-on activities to improve regional stability.⁵⁵ Combined Joint Task Force-OIR (CJTF-OIR), which executes the OIR campaign, reported no changes to the OIR campaign or objectives in Iraq and Syria during the quarter.⁵⁶

CJTF-OIR also reported satisfactory, if incremental, progress toward OIR’s first line of effort, to defeat ISIS in designated areas of Iraq and Syria and related campaign objectives during the quarter.⁵⁷ Progress toward these objectives, CJTF OIR said, remains “at a satisfactory level, with no improvement nor regression.”⁵⁸ CJTF-OIR said that the Coalition and its local partners have “precluded [ISIS] from regenerating,” and ISIS remains incapable of seizing territory.⁵⁹

The campaign’s second line of effort is to ensure that partner forces are capable of defeating ISIS. CJTF-OIR reported that the progress of the Iraqi Security Forces (ISF) and Counter Terrorism Service (CTS) is “satisfactory.”⁶⁰ The ISF, which includes the CTS, Iraq’s elite special operations force, is capable of tactical overmatch” of ISIS with “marginal improvements throughout the quarter due to demonstrated advances in combined arms tactics and operations,” CJTF-OIR reported.⁶¹ CJTF-OIR said that the Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) also have the ability to “win against ISIS” in a fight. However, CJTF-OIR noted that intervention by other national militaries, influence of the local population or advance reconnaissance by ISIS could all impact that ability.⁶² Additionally, CJTF-OIR continued, “partner forces remain dependent on Coalition capabilities,” including U.S.-funded and provided equipment, to defeat ISIS.⁶³ For further details about Iraqi and Syrian partner force capabilities during the quarter, see pages 31–41 and 69–72.

Syrian Defense Force Soldiers conduct a patrol during a joint operation with U.S. Army Coalition Soldiers in Syria. (U.S. Army photo)



About Operation Inherent Resolve

OIR began in 2014, after the United States and its partners in the Global Coalition to Defeat ISIS initiated military activity to support local partners combatting ISIS in Iraq and Syria.⁶⁴ Comprising former al-Qaeda fighters and new recruits, ISIS exploited instability in Iraq and Syria and rapidly seized major cities in the two countries.⁶⁵

CJTF-OIR executes OIR according to a four-phase operational campaign plan, shown in Figure 1.⁶⁶ During the first three phases of the campaign, Coalition forces conducted airstrikes and special operation raids against ISIS. U.S. and Coalition forces also worked by, with, and through Iraqi and Syrian partner forces in their actions against ISIS by enabling, training, advising, and providing equipment and other forms of assistance to those forces. By March 2019, Coalition and partner force operations succeeded in ending ISIS territorial control in Iraq and Syria. In July 2020, CJTF-OIR transitioned to Phase IV (“Normalize”) of the campaign plan.⁶⁷

Figure 1.

The OIR Campaign Plan



Source: CJTF-OIR, “History of CJTF-OIR,” 9/2020.

During Phase IV, CJTF-OIR shifted from tactical-level training and building the capacity of partner forces in both Iraq and Syria to primarily advising and enabling them.⁶⁸ CJTF-OIR has not publicly articulated the end state it seeks to achieve under Phase IV, nor has it released a timeline for the completion of OIR.

USAID, the U.S. Government lead for stabilization activities in Iraq, focuses on restoring essential infrastructure and services by working with local partners to identify priorities for recovery; improve social cohesion; and help marginalized and displaced populations return and to rebuild their places of origin.⁶⁹ The DoS seeks to help Iraq chart a security and foreign policy path separate from that of Iran or other powers; enable political and economic reform; support vulnerable minority populations; and achieve reconciliation among communities.⁷⁰ In Syria, the DoS seeks to advance a durable political solution to the Syrian conflict that “represents the will of all Syrians,” the enduring defeat of ISIS, the successful reintegration of displaced persons, and the repatriation of captured terrorist fighters from countries other than Iraq and Syria.⁷¹

The third line of effort is to “leverage Coalition effects” in order to support ongoing CJTF-OIR operations and prepare for follow-on operations. CJTF-OIR reported that there was no change to the Coalition’s efforts to enable CJTF-OIR operations.”⁷²

STATUS OF ISIS

ISIS Entrenched as a Low-level Insurgency

The Defense Intelligence Agency (DIA) reported that ISIS continued to operate as a “low-level” insurgency that remains “well-entrenched” in rural areas of Iraq and Syria.⁷³ ISIS’s overall strategy, which did not change during the quarter, is to sustain the group’s notoriety, rebuild influence among the local populace, and reestablish a self-described “caliphate” in the region.⁷⁴

ACTIVITY: ISIS attacks—both attacks claimed by ISIS and attacks that others attributed to ISIS—increased in Iraq and Syria during the quarter. The rise in attacks was in keeping with the annual spike in ISIS operations for the month of Ramadan, which began on April 13.⁷⁵ (See page 19.) However, CJTF-OIR reported that overall, ISIS activity during the quarter was comparable to historic norms, and that the lethality of ISIS attacks declined, possibly because of constrained resources and inexperienced members.⁷⁶ CJTF-OIR said that the most deadly attacks were ambush attacks on partner security forces responding to the scene of a previous attack.⁷⁷

ISIS tactics in both countries remained largely unchanged during the quarter, as the group continued to conduct hit-and-run and IED attacks, the DIA said. ISIS fighters were able to carry out a higher number of complex attacks in Iraq compared to their counterparts in Syria, likely indicating “a higher level of operational maturity” among fighters in Iraq.⁷⁸

ISIS typically targeted security forces in both countries as well as tribal and civic leaders and other symbols of governance.⁷⁹ However, ISIS targeting of U.S. and Coalition forces in Syria has been “infrequent, and generally ineffective,” USCENTCOM said.⁸⁰ USCENTCOM said that even though ISIS often mentions “crusaders” in its propaganda,” the group has not carried out any deliberate attacks, successful or otherwise, against U.S. or Coalition forces in Syria since January 2019, when ISIS conducted a suicide attack that killed four U.S. personnel in Manbij.⁸¹ USCENTCOM said that ISIS likely has reduced the priority of attacking U.S. or other Coalition forces in favor of more accessible targets like Syrian regime forces and their backers.⁸²

RECRUITING: The DIA reported that ISIS remained a cohesive organization; the DIA did not observe any splintering or major defections from the group during the quarter.⁸³ The DIA said that it observed no substantive changes to ISIS recruiting during the quarter in either Iraq or Syria.⁸⁴

During the quarter, ISIS continued its practice of targeting the most susceptible for recruitment, particularly in displaced persons camps, where the group has relative freedom of movement and extensive influence.⁸⁵ The DIA said that ISIS has given priority to smuggling boys out of these camps to training locations in the Syrian desert.⁸⁶

CJTF-OIR reported that overall, ISIS activity during the quarter was comparable to historic norms, and that the lethality of ISIS attacks declined, possibly because of constrained resources and inexperienced members.

ISIS continued to raise funds through extortion of oil smuggling networks in eastern Syria, collecting kidnapping ransoms, looting, and possibly the operation of front companies in both Iraq and Syria.

FINANCES: The Department of the Treasury (Treasury) reported that ISIS probably has tens of millions of dollars in cash reserves dispersed across Iraq, Syria, and Turkey.⁸⁷ ISIS continued to raise funds through extortion of oil smuggling networks in eastern Syria, collecting kidnapping ransoms, looting, and possibly the operation of front companies in both Iraq and Syria.⁸⁸

Treasury reported that during the quarter, ISIS members in Iraq transferred funds to ISIS members in northeastern Syria, including to individuals living at al-Hol and other displaced persons camps. ISIS members or supporters often conducted transfers by gathering and sending funds to intermediaries in Turkey who smuggled the cash into Syria or sent the funds to “hawalas” (informal financial transfer services) in the camp.⁸⁹

As reported in previous quarters, ISIS relied on courier networks to smuggle cash between Iraq and Syria and money services, including hawalas, throughout Iraq, Syria, and Turkey to move funds internationally.⁹⁰ Treasury said that ISIS often relied on facilitators in Turkey and in other financial centers, as well as on virtual currencies and online fundraising platforms.⁹¹

EXTERNAL OPERATIONS: As in the previous quarter, the DIA assessed that while ISIS continued its efforts to bolster its operational reach by publicly encouraging external branches to conduct attacks against the West, these branches lack the capability to conduct attacks against the U.S. homeland. The DIA said that ISIS was probably still seeking to develop the capability to conduct directed attacks in Europe.⁹²

The DIA said that ISIS continues to rely on its ability to inspire individuals to conduct small-scale attacks to demonstrate its reach beyond its normal operating areas.⁹³ Though ISIS has not claimed responsibility for any attacks by lone actors in Europe in 2021, the DIA said that lone actors inspired by ISIS propaganda remain the “most serious threat” ISIS poses to security in Europe or the United States because they are already there, can use simple weapons, and can launch attacks with little or no warning.⁹⁴

An analysis of ISIS activity released in June by the Institute for the Study of War found that while ISIS affiliates in Africa carry out larger and “faster-paced” attacks than their Iraqi and Syrian counterparts, ISIS leadership in its “core” territory of Iraq and Syria likely provides a “vital” centralizing connection between ISIS’s global cells.⁹⁵

In Iraq, ISIS Exploits Security Gaps to Conduct Attacks

ISIS continued to conduct lethal attacks in Iraq during the quarter, often targeting Iraqi security forces and infrastructure.⁹⁶ The DIA said that ISIS seeks to undermine stability and public confidence in the Iraqi government, preserve safe havens, and reconstitute its attack capabilities.⁹⁷

ISIS continued to focus its activity in rural and ungoverned areas of Iraq where the presence of security forces is low.⁹⁸ ISIS remained active in the historically Sunni-dominated Anbar, Ninewa, Kirkuk, Salah ad Din, and Diyala provinces.⁹⁹ The DIA said that the group maintains safe havens in isolated areas, such as the Hamrin mountains in Kirkuk and the deserts in Anbar.¹⁰⁰

In May, ISIS detonated a vehicle bomb in the midst of a gathering of the government-aligned Tribal Mobilization Forces in Anbar province, killing approximately 12 people, CJTF-OIR said.¹⁰¹ The group also released a propaganda video that showed ISIS operatives interrogating civilians about collaborating with the government before executing them, setting fire to agricultural fields and equipment, and attacking security force patrols.¹⁰²

ISIS also took advantage of security gaps in urban areas, including Baghdad and Mosul, to conduct high-profile attacks during the quarter, the DIA said.¹⁰³ On April 15, ISIS conducted a vehicle-borne improvised explosive device attack in the Sadr City neighborhood of Baghdad that killed at least one person and injured at least a dozen people.¹⁰⁴ Another 15 people were injured in a bombing in a Sadr City marketplace on June 30, according to media reporting.¹⁰⁵

ISIS was likely responsible for multiple attacks during the quarter that targeted Iraqi electrical towers with explosive devices.¹⁰⁶ ISIS claimed responsibility for a late-June rocket attack on a power station in Salah ad Din province.¹⁰⁷ CJTF-OIR said that ISIS probably views infrastructure as a soft target; the attacks require minimal resources and personnel, but the resulting electricity disruptions garner attention and undermine the Iraqi government.¹⁰⁸

The DIA said that ISIS also continues to take advantage of a security vacuum caused by the COVID-19 pandemic to reorganize and redistribute its forces.¹⁰⁹ According to media reports, in February, a Kurdish Security Forces (Peshmerga) commander said that many counter-ISIS activities in Iraq had been placed on hold during the pandemic, and that thousands of ISIS fighters who had been hiding among civilians after the group lost its territorial control had seized on the lull to emerged from hiding and begin operating in the mountains again.¹¹⁰



Peshmerga soldiers conduct shooting training in Erbil, Iraq. (U.S. Army photo)

CJTF-OIR reported that ISIS endures partly because of the security void between ISF and Kurdish forces in disputed areas, known as the Kurdistan Coordination Line, near the Iraqi Kurdistan Region.

CJTF-OIR reported that ISIS endures partly because of the security void between ISF and Kurdish forces in disputed areas, known as the Kurdistan Coordination Line, near the Iraqi Kurdistan Region.¹¹¹ The DIA reported that ISIS exploits the lack of coordination between the ISF and the Peshmerga to conduct operations against Iraqi forces in the region and to sustain facilitation and smuggling routes.¹¹²

In addition, CJTF-OIR said the presence of Popular Mobilization Forces (PMF) in the disputed region further exacerbates the security gap because Peshmerga forces and the PMF do not cooperate, and PMF malign activities in the predominately Sunni Arab areas are driving more Sunni Arabs to join or support ISIS.¹¹³ ISIS attacks on Peshmerga positions in the disputed region during the quarter led Kurdish and Iraqi political figures to call for increased ISF-Peshmerga coordination, CJTF-OIR reported.¹¹⁴

Further information about ISF-Peshmerga joint operations during the quarter can be found on page 35 of this report.

In Syria, ISIS Focused Attacks in Dayr az Zawr and the Syrian Desert

In Syria, ISIS continued to focus its attacks mostly in the SDF-controlled northeastern region of the country, primarily along the Middle Euphrates River Valley and around the town of Mayadin in Dayr az Zawr governorate.¹¹⁵ Nearly half of ISIS attacks in northeastern Syria during the quarter targeted security and military personnel; the remainder targeted civilians, the DIA reported.¹¹⁶ ISIS targeted the SDF and aligned tribal leaders in its efforts to undermine public support for the SDF and create a permissive environment for ISIS to operate.¹¹⁷

The DIA reported that ISIS also increased the number of attacks against pro-regime forces in southern and central Syria compared to the previous quarter, particularly in the eastern Syrian desert (also known as the “Badiyah”).¹¹⁸ These attacks were concentrated near the cities of Palmyra and Sukhnah and consisted of hit-and-run attacks on regime convoys and isolated units.¹¹⁹ For example, USCENTCOM reported that in June, ISIS attacked a convoy of militia vehicles near Sukhnah, killing or wounding 25 Iran-backed militia members, including two senior officers of the Iranian Revolutionary Guard Corps.¹²⁰

ISIS remained focused during the quarter on increasing its manpower and consolidating personnel and materiel in the eastern Syrian desert, where it has been able to utilize the difficult environment to find safe haven and conduct attacks despite persistent counterterrorism operations by regime forces and Coalition partners.¹²¹ The DIA reported that by operating from the desert, ISIS could avoid Coalition-led targeting and prepare for the next phase of its insurgency.¹²² In addition, ISIS leaders depend on known routes that traverse ungoverned areas of the Syrian desert to connect from Idlib governorate to Iraq’s Anbar desert.¹²³ ISIS senior leaders use Idlib as a safe haven, the DIA said.¹²⁴

CJTF-OIR noted that while ISIS activity in the Syrian desert is considered during Coalition or SDF operational planning, ISIS attacks are primarily focused on regime forces and their allies and have minimal impact on Coalition and SDF operations.¹²⁵



U.S. Army Soldiers and Syrian Democratic Forces members visit a village to evaluate local conditions. (U.S. Army photo)

The Russian military has conducted hundreds of airstrikes in support of Syrian regime operations in the Syrian desert since February, according to media and observer reporting.¹²⁶ USCENTCOM said that Russia conducted these operations in response to repeated ISIS attacks targeting regime and militia outposts, oil convoys, and military personnel in transit.¹²⁷

The impact of the Russian operations on ISIS activity is not clear. According to an independent analysis, ISIS attacks in the Syrian desert decreased in April and May due to the concerted pressure from regime, Russian, and Iranian operations across Dayr az Zawr, Homs, and Raqqah governorates.¹²⁸ At the same time, USCENTCOM said the Russian and Assad regime operations have had little apparent impact on ISIS capabilities, and that ISIS retained considerable freedom of movement through parts of the desert region during the quarter.¹²⁹ This could be attributable in part to ISIS's familiarity with the desert terrain and its ability to use the mountains and caves as places of shelter, giving it the element of surprise in attacks.¹³⁰

USCENTCOM said that ISIS likely has sufficient manpower and resources to operate indefinitely at its present level in the Syrian desert.¹³¹ However, USCENTCOM identified several ways in which the desert environment limits the capacity of ISIS to grow or strengthen its insurgency there. The desert is sparsely populated, with few potential recruits and few economic resources to exploit. ISIS extracts "taxes" from truckers carrying oil through the region, but the revenue is likely far below the amounts ISIS received when it controlled the oil fields. In addition, the desert has limited built up areas, so ISIS members mostly shelter in caves and abandoned structures.¹³²

USCENTCOM reported that the SDF detained 125 people in al-Hol during the sweep of the camp.

USCENTCOM said that it is likely that ISIS presence in the Syrian desert will continue to pose a lethal threat to small SDF elements and individuals associated with the SDF and the Self-Administration of North and East Syria (SNES). USCENTCOM said that ISIS operations have complicated SDF governing efforts and resulted in casualties among the SDF, its affiliates, and local civilians.¹³³ Still, USCENTCOM said that ISIS remains unable to capitalize on its destabilizing activities to “sustain a high operational tempo, or expand the scope, complexity, or lethality of its operations.”¹³⁴

Violence at al-Hol Reduced Following SDF Sweep

Security remained an ongoing concern at the al-Hol displaced persons camp in Hasakah governorate, where USCENTCOM said ISIS retained a “strong presence” among the approximately 60,000 residents in the humanitarian camp.¹³⁵

USCENTCOM reported that a 5-day sweep by SDF internal security forces at al-Hol that began in late March likely helped quell ISIS-related violence in the camp.¹³⁶ The DoS said that there were 15 killings in al-Hol during the quarter, compared to 45 during the previous quarter.¹³⁷ However, killings and other ISIS reported activity began to rise in June.¹³⁸ USCENTCOM reported that if security were relaxed, ISIS would likely increase its violent activities to previous levels.¹³⁹

USCENTCOM reported that the SDF detained 125 people in al-Hol during the sweep of the camp.¹⁴⁰ CJTF-OIR reported that the SDF also conducted concurrent biometric enrollments, and evidence collections.¹⁴¹ CJTF-OIR said the operation not only reduced the number of killings in the camp, but also gave the SDF “an accounting” of the population.¹⁴²

In June, the SDF announced the arrest of a four-man ISIS “assassination squad” in the camp, according to a media report. According to a media report, the SDF said the men were Iraqis who fled Anbar, Iraq to Syria in 2017 after ISF liberation operations, and arrived in al-Hol in 2019, as the SDF removed ISIS from its last territorial stronghold. The SDF said the assassination squad is believed to have killed several people inside al-Hol.¹⁴³

CONCERNS ABOUT VIOLENCE, RECRUITMENT REMAIN

The increase in ISIS-suspected violence in June underscored concerns that the reduction in violence may only be temporary. Reports citing the SDF and an affiliated research group said that at least eight of the quarter’s killings occurred in June. These included two sisters who were shot by gunmen reported to be members of an ISIS cell, an Iraqi woman who was shot inside her tent, and a Syrian man who was shot while leaving a camp mosque, according to a human rights group.¹⁴⁴ The DoS reported that most of the killings during the quarter appeared to be targeted killings of camp residents with perceived ties to the security services, while some were likely unrelated to ISIS.¹⁴⁵

ISIS also continued its efforts to target residents of al-Hol in an attempt to radicalize them. USCENTCOM reported that in exchange for financial support, female ISIS members in the foreigner’s annex of the camp increased their radicalization and recruitment activities, promoting ISIS ideology on social media.¹⁴⁶ According to USCENTCOM and media reporting, ISIS activists in the camp focused their radicalization efforts on children and teenagers.¹⁴⁷

DOS: REPATRIATION “BEST HOPE” FOR DISPLACED PERSONS

Al-Hol is a humanitarian camp for individuals and families who fled violence in Syria and Iraq. According to the DoS, more than two thirds of the camp’s residents are children, “who are first and foremost victims” in need of assistance, with more than 50 percent under the age of 12.¹⁴⁸ While the vast majority of the camp’s residents are Syrian and Iraqi, as of last quarter, approximately 9,000 were women and children from other countries.¹⁴⁹ Most arrived in the camp in early 2019, following the battle to end the ISIS territorial control in Syria.¹⁵⁰ An unknown number of those residents are families of ISIS fighters or others who maintain some loyalty to or degree of affiliation with ISIS, the DoS and USCENTCOM reported.¹⁵¹

The DoS said that it “strongly supports efforts to remove violent actors, active ISIS operatives, and weapons from [al-Hol], as high levels of violence impede the ability of humanitarian organizations to safely provide assistance at the camp, and further traumatizes an already vulnerable population.”¹⁵²

According to the DoS, the SNES, security providers, and the humanitarian organizations that operate in al-Hol are currently discussing the security posture at the camp. They are looking at ways to improve external and internal security without compromising humanitarian services and access at the camp. The DoS supports this direct dialogue, and supports both sides coming to a mutually agreeable solution.¹⁵³

The United States, the United Nations, SDF officials, and aid agencies have urged countries to repatriate their citizens from al-Hol as the only durable long-term solution for non-Syrians.¹⁵⁴ The DoS said that giving children in particular a chance at re-establishing normalcy and reunification with families in their home countries is the “best hope” for these individuals.¹⁵⁵ The DoS added that it continues to encourage the international community to consider how they might support humanitarian organizations providing education, psychological support, and protection services at the camp.¹⁵⁶

The Near and Middle East Regional Director of the International Committee of the Red Cross, Fabrizio Carboni, reported at a June 30 news briefing that conditions in al-Hol are worse now than the “horrifying” suffering he saw in 2019, and “there is a pervasive sense of hopelessness” in the camp.¹⁵⁷

DOS OFFICIALS VISIT AL-HOL; MEET WITH CAMP ADMINISTRATION AND HUMANITARIAN AID GROUPS

At the end of June, Acting U.S. Special Envoy John T. Godfrey led a delegation of officials to northeast Syria to visit al-Hol camp, where they met with humanitarian assistance groups and camp administration.¹⁵⁸ The DoS said that the purpose of the visit was to build understanding of the challenges that humanitarian assistance groups and local authorities face in providing services and managing al-Hol so that the DoS can better channel assistance and advocacy on this complex issue. After the visit, Acting Special Envoy Godfrey discussed his trip with D-ISIS Coalition partners at the June 28 Ministerial.¹⁵⁹

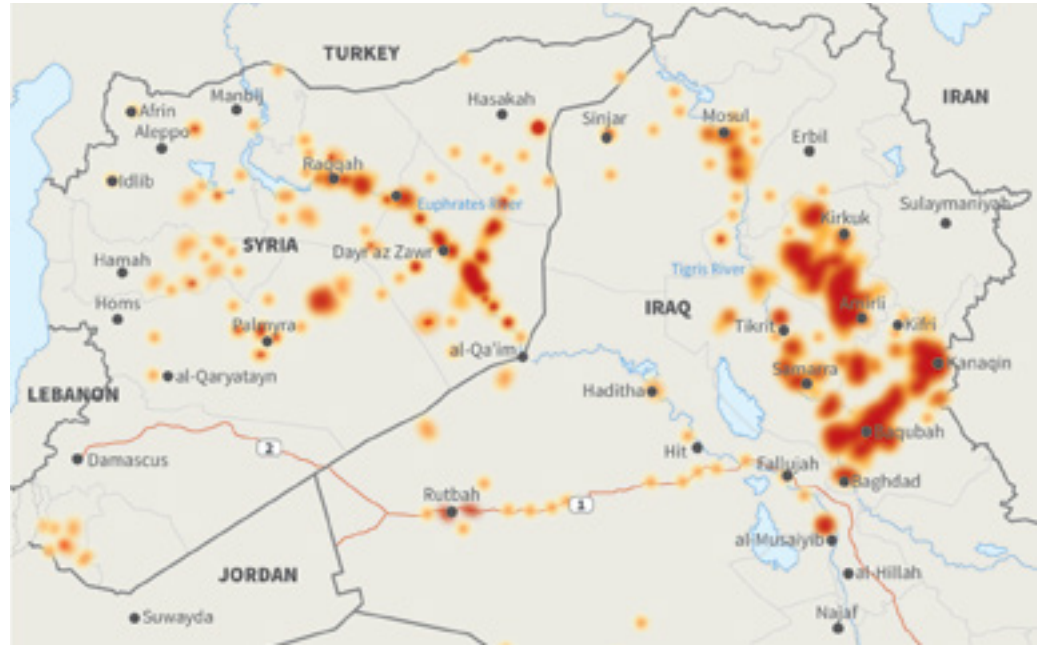
Further information about repatriation of residents from al-Hol and other IDP camps can be found on page 59 of this report.

ISIS ACTIVITY IN IRAQ AND SYRIA

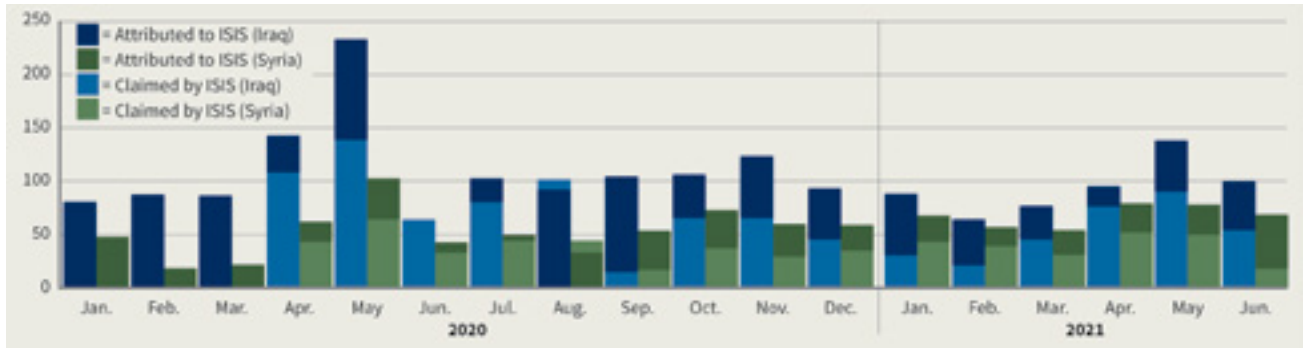
April 1, 2021–June 30, 2021

IRAQ ISIS attacks surged during Ramadan and included intensified attacks on Iraq's electrical infrastructure, using IEDs to destroy power transmission lines in Diyala, Ninewa, northern Baghdad, and Kirkuk provinces. ISIS focused hit-and-run and IED attacks around the Wadi al-Shay area of Kirkuk province and northeastern Salah ad Din province.

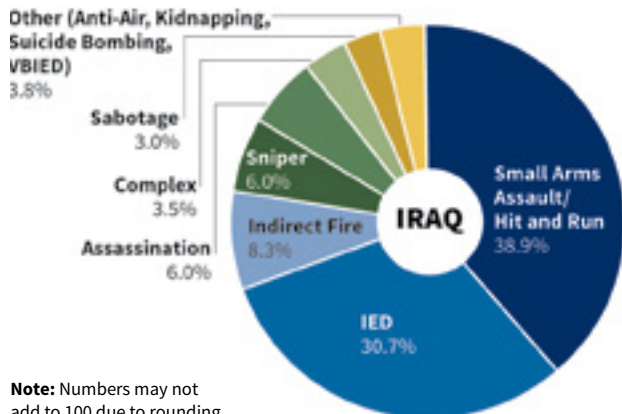
SYRIA Attacks increased during Ramadan and continued at elevated levels through the rest of the quarter. ISIS intensified small-scale attacks along the SDF-controlled side of the Middle Euphrates River Valley, while lethal ambushes on pro-regime Forces continued in central Syria.



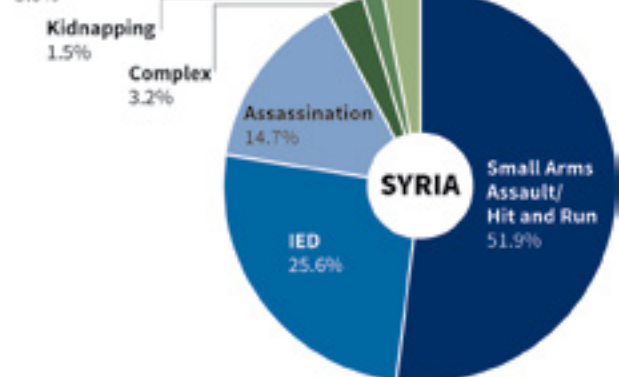
ISIS Attacks by Month, January 2020–June 2021



ISIS Attacks by Tactic, January 2020–June 2021



Other (Indirect Fire, Prison Riot/Attempted Escape, Sabotage, Suicide Bombing, VBIED, Sniper, Anti-Tank Guided Missile)



Note: Numbers may not add to 100 due to rounding.

Sources: Armed Conflict Location and Event Data Project (ACLED), data for battles, explosions, and attacks on civilians by Islamic State (Iraq and Syria), 1/1/2020–6/30/2021; Janes Terrorism and Insurgency Centre, data for non-state armed group attacks, statements, and actions by Islamic State in Iraq and Syria, 1/1/2020–6/30/2021; Enabling Peace in Iraq Center, "Iraq Security and Humanitarian Monitor," 12/19/2019–7/1/2021.

Secretary of State Antony J. Blinken participates in the Opening Session of the D-ISIS Ministerial Meeting in Rome. (DoS photo)



D-ISIS Coalition Reaffirms Shared Fight Against ISIS

On June 28, U.S. Secretary of State Antony J. Blinken and Italian Minister of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation Luigi Di Maio cohosted a meeting of the foreign ministers of the 83-member Global Coalition to Defeat ISIS (D-ISIS Coalition).¹⁶⁰ The ministers assessed priorities for the Coalition’s lines of effort related to stabilization, foreign terrorist fighters, counter-ISIS financing, and counter-messaging efforts. It was the first in-person meeting of the Coalition’s foreign ministers in nearly 2 years.¹⁶¹

Secretary Blinken said that the U.S. Government’s top priorities remain to sustain military gains: “we must reaffirm our commitment, including to Operation Inherent Resolve, the complementary NATO mission in Iraq, and to civilian-led counterterrorism capacity building,” Secretary Blinken said.¹⁶² He cited the need for renewed Coalition stabilization assistance support across Iraq and Syria to prevent a potential ISIS resurgence. He also noted that the 10,000 ISIS fighters who remained in SDF detention in Syria was an “untenable” situation and said the U.S. Government urges countries of origin to “repatriate, rehabilitate, and, where applicable, prosecute their citizens.”¹⁶³

The Secretary also noted that the enduring defeat of ISIS “also means effectively confronting ISIS threats outside of Iraq and Syria” and mentioned the importance of dealing with ISIS networks elsewhere, including in sub-Saharan Africa, in the Sahel Region, and East Africa.¹⁶⁴

In a joint communiqué issued after the meeting, the ministers committed to strengthening cooperation across all Coalition lines of effort to ensure that the ISIS “core” in Iraq and Syria, and its affiliates and networks around the world are unable to reconstitute or threaten Coalition homelands, people, and interests.¹⁶⁵ Although ISIS no longer controls territory in Iraq and Syria, the threat of resurgence remains in areas where the Coalition is not active, requiring “strong vigilance and coordinated action” by the international community.¹⁶⁶ To that end, the ministers discussed the importance of allocating adequate resources to sustain Coalition and legitimate partner forces’ efforts, providing significant stabilization support to address “drivers that make communities vulnerable” to recruitment by ISIS and related violent ideological groups, providing support to liberated areas and safeguarding collective interests.¹⁶⁷

STATUS OF FUNDING

MILITARY OPERATIONS AND PARTNER FORCE ASSISTANCE

For FY 2021, Congress appropriated \$12.7 billion for OIR Direct War Costs, of which \$3.6 billion had been expended by the end of March 2021.¹⁶⁸ Appropriation supporting OIR included \$710 million for the Counter-ISIS Train and Equip Fund (CTEF), the principal funding authority to support the defeat-ISIS campaign in Iraq and Syria “by, with, and through” properly vetted units within ISF, including units within the Kurdish Peshmerga, and vetted Syrian groups and individuals. The majority of CTEF funding (\$510 million) is allocated for use in Iraq, while the remainder (\$200 million) is allocated to support vetted partner forces in Syria. Current disbursements of CTEF funding during FY 2021 were not available.¹⁶⁹

In May, the DoD Comptroller released the DoD’s budget request for FY 2022. In what the request describes as a “significant budgetary reform,” the budget did not separate Overseas Contingency Operation funding from regular “base” funding for the DoD, as had been the case in previous fiscal years. Instead, funding for OIR, Operation Freedom’s Sentinel, and other overseas operations was moved to the base budget, labeled as “direct war costs.”¹⁷⁰

The budget request—which still requires approval by Congress—allocates less funding for OIR compared to previous years, citing decreased training and equipment costs. For FY 2022, the Administration requested \$5.4 billion for OIR Direct War Costs, based on an assumed troop level in Iraq and Syria of 3,400 personnel.¹⁷¹ The request includes



Counter-ISIS Train and Equip Fund program provides ammunition to the Iraqi Security Forces at al-Asad Air Base. (U.S. Army photo)

\$522 million for CTEF, including \$345 million for Iraq and \$177 million for Syria. From FY 2021 to FY 2022, the DoD request for Iraq training and equipping support under CTEF decreased by more than 90 percent, from \$282 million to \$20 million. This reflects the continued shift in Coalition direct support to partner force operations from the tactical to operational level. The request included \$240 million in funding for Peshmerga stipends for FY 2022 to enable the continued readiness of vetted units, and assist in maintaining pressure against ISIS within the region.¹⁷²

STABILIZATION

The Biden Administration lifted the Trump Administration’s freeze on stabilization assistance for Syria. On March 30, Secretary of State Antony J. Blinken announced that the U. S. Government would contribute almost \$50 million for further stabilization of the territory liberated from ISIS in northeast Syria, noting that the United States is “working closely with Coalition partners on this endeavor.”¹⁷³

HUMANITARIAN ASSISTANCE

The USAID Bureau of Humanitarian Assistance (BHA) and the DoS Bureau for Population, Refugees, and Migration (PRM) work with the United Nations, NGOs, and other implementing partners, to fund a variety of programs and services in Iraq and Syria. These programs include—but are not limited to—food assistance, cash assistance, shelter, health, and education in Iraq, Syria, and neighboring countries.¹⁷⁴ (See Table 1.)

Globally, the United States remains the largest single donor to the humanitarian response in Iraq and Syria. The UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) reported that, as of the end of the quarter, the U.S. Government had committed approximately \$38 million in humanitarian assistance towards the needs identified in the 2021 UN Humanitarian Response Plan for Iraq, and \$384.7 million in humanitarian assistance for the 2021 response plan for Syria.¹⁷⁵ The DoS said that these UN totals do not fully incorporate all forms of support for the Syria response, as there are frequently delays in funding being reported by the UN’s Financial Tracking System.¹⁷⁶

Since the start of the Syrian crisis, the United States has provided nearly \$13.5 billion in humanitarian assistance to individuals in Syria and those Syrians displaced throughout the region.¹⁷⁷

On June 3, the U.S. Representative to the United Nations, Ambassador Linda Thomas-Greenfield, announced the U.S. Government’s humanitarian assistance commitment of \$249 million to Syrian refugees and vulnerable populations. This is in addition to the \$596 million she announced on March 30 at the Fifth Brussels Conference on “Supporting the Future of Syria and the Region.”¹⁷⁸

During the June 28 Syria Ministerial Meeting, held on the margins of the D-ISIS Ministerial, Secretary Blinken announced more than \$436 million in additional U.S. Government funding to support the humanitarian response in Syria and Syrian refugees in neighboring countries. This assistance, provided through USAID BHA and DoS PRM, will reinforce support for displaced persons, refugees, and other vulnerable populations in Syria

Since the start of the Syrian crisis, the United States has provided nearly \$13.5 billion in humanitarian assistance to individuals in Syria and those Syrians displaced throughout the region.

Table 1.

U.S. Government Funding Available for the Iraq and Syria Humanitarian Response, as of June 2021

IRAQ HUMANITARIAN RESPONSE FY 2021			
	USAID BHA	DoS PRM	TOTAL
Humanitarian Response FY 2021	\$45,829,965	N/A	\$45,829,965
Humanitarian Response FY 2020	\$120,728,219	\$224,455,134	\$345,183,353
COVID-19 Response	\$32,500,000	14,505,000	\$47,005,000
TOTAL			\$438,018,318
SYRIA REGIONAL RESPONSE FY 2021			
	USAID BHA	DoS PRM	TOTAL
Crisis Response	\$449,186,643	\$144,800,000	\$643,986,643
Humanitarian Funding for Countries that Host Syrian Refugees			
Egypt	\$20,280,000	\$17,436,039	\$37,716,939
Iraq	N/A	\$31,890,000	\$31,890,000
Jordan	\$72,800,000	\$118,573,703	\$191,373,703
Lebanon	\$70,020,000	\$182,739,543	\$252,759,543
Turkey	\$10,760,000	\$95,350,000	\$106,110,000
Regional	N/A	\$7,500,000	\$7,500,000
TOTAL	\$673,046,643	\$598,290,185	\$1,271,336,828

Sources: USAID, "Iraq-Complex Emergency Fact Sheet #1," 12/16/2020; USAID, "Iraq-Complex Emergency Fact Sheet #3," 6/16/2021; USAID, "Syria-Complex Emergency Fact Sheet #8," 6/28/2021.

and the region by providing emergency cash, education, food, health, livelihood, nutrition, protection, shelter, and water, sanitation, and hygiene assistance. Secretary Blinken and his D-ISIS Coalition counterparts emphasized the importance of meeting humanitarian needs in Syria, including through the provision and expansion of UN cross-border assistance.¹⁷⁹

FY 2019 and FY 2020 DoS Funds Programmed During the Quarter

In FY 2019, FY 2020, and FY 2021, Congress earmarked \$40 million from the Economic Support Fund (ESF), International Narcotics Control and Law Enforcement (INCLE), and Peacekeeping Operations accounts for Syria. Although some programs are supported by other funding sources, ESF funds support the bulk of stabilization programming in Syria, which helps to ensure the enduring defeat of ISIS and contributes to the restoration of daily life by closing gaps in local authority capacities and addressing community and individual vulnerabilities previously exploited by ISIS.¹⁸⁰

In addition, Congress earmarked INCLE funding for the Office of Global Criminal Justice to support transitional justice and accountability programming, including in Syria.¹⁸¹ These justice and accountability programs hold ISIS accountable for atrocities committed against the Syrian people. The INCLE funding also supports a DoS program that supports community security, building the capacity of internal security forces in northeastern Syria to ensure they can provide effective security services that are supported by the population.¹⁸²

For FY 2020, the DoS and USAID notified Congress of intent to program a total of \$49.95 million to support Syria stabilization, including \$42.75 million in ESF and \$7.2 million in INCLE funding. During the quarter, the DoS and USAID started to program the funding. Funding levels for Syria stabilization in FY 2021 have not been finalized.¹⁸³

For FY 2020, the DoS and USAID notified Congress of intent to program a total of \$49.95 million to support Syria stabilization, including \$42.75 million in ESF and \$7.2 million in INCLE funding.

STATUS OF PERSONNEL

MILITARY PERSONNEL

The number of U.S. military personnel in Iraq and Syria remained unchanged during the quarter, according to numbers released by the DoD Office of the Undersecretary of Defense for Policy-International Security Affairs.¹⁸⁴ Updated contractor numbers for the quarter were not available.

DIPLOMATIC AND AID PERSONNEL

Mission Iraq Staffing Restrictions Adversely Affect Services and Morale

The DoS said that it continued to assess the security and health environment in Iraq, following the DoS decision to place the U.S. Embassy in Baghdad on ordered departure in March 2020. The ordered departure for the embassy and the Baghdad Diplomatic Support Center is currently set to expire on August 16, 2021; the embassy's Emergency Action Committee and the Department will review the situation before the expiration date.¹⁸⁵ Consulate General Erbil's ordered departure terminated on July 22, 2020. Since April 29, 2021, the DoS has approved the return of 95 employees.¹⁸⁶

During the quarter, the DoS approved limited increases in staffing for USAID expatriate personnel that applied to U.S. direct hires and third country nationals.¹⁸⁷ USAID reported that, as of June 24, there were 11 expatriate staff in country: 6 in Baghdad and 5 in Erbil.¹⁸⁸ By comparison, during the second quarter of FY 2021, there were five USAID expatriate personnel in country.¹⁸⁹ Despite the staff increase, the current in-country staffing levels remain below the 13 positions authorized by the DoS in June 2020.¹⁹⁰

During the quarter, the embassy requested the ordered departure be lifted in order to resume normal operations, based on the reduction in rocket attacks against the compound in 2021 compared to 2020. The embassy's Emergency Action Committee met on June 9 to discuss whether to continue the ordered departure. However, later that day, the Baghdad Diplomatic Support Center sustained an attack by two weaponized unmanned aerial vehicles that

The U.S. Embassy in Baghdad reported that as of June 12, 75 percent of the total population of U.S. Mission Iraq (the Baghdad embassy compound, the Baghdad Diplomatic Support Center, and the consulate in Erbil) was fully vaccinated, and 8 percent partially vaccinated.

caused significant damage to a food preparation area and required nine personnel to seek medical evaluation for minor injuries. The ordered departure was subsequently extended for an additional 30 days to July 17 and has since been extended to August 16, 2021.¹⁹¹

The DoS reported that operating for long periods of time at reduced in-country staffing levels increased strain and adversely affected the morale of employees both at and away from post. On-the-ground staff assumed additional responsibilities, resulting in longer workdays and reduced downtime. Additionally, the lack of locally employed staff since the start of the pandemic caused U.S. direct-hire staff to absorb larger portfolios, resulting in reduced services. Despite reduced in-country staff, the embassy reported it continues to fulfill its mission, although at a “cost to employees, efficiency, and oversight.”¹⁹²

In response to the staffing limits, the DoS said it “offshored” personnel at accessible locations when feasible. However, the combination of COVID-19 travel restrictions and limited space at nearby diplomatic missions has created obstacles for relocating significant numbers of personnel.¹⁹³

COVID Vaccine Hesitancy Hinders Security Operations at the Embassy

The U.S. Embassy in Baghdad reported that as of June 12, 75 percent of the total population of U.S. Mission Iraq (the Baghdad embassy compound, the Baghdad Diplomatic Support Center, and the consulate in Erbil) was fully vaccinated, and 8 percent partially vaccinated.¹⁹⁴ This includes U.S. citizen direct hires, third-country nationals, and local contractors. However, 50 percent of U.S. citizen security contractors at the embassy had refused the COVID-19 vaccine. This has hindered security operations, the embassy said. At times 50 or more security personnel have been sidelined at once while infected people recover or quarantine and those who came into contact with them are confined to quarters for a 14-day isolation period. In cases when it is necessary to evacuate the infected individual, as many as 20 support personnel will come in contact with infected persons.¹⁹⁵

The embassy reported that it does not have the authority to require all personnel working in Mission Iraq facilities to be vaccinated.¹⁹⁶ On June 17, the American Foreign Service Association, the exclusive bargaining agent for the Foreign Service, issued a statement urging the Biden Administration to allow the DoS to require all personnel, including direct-hires, contractors, locally employed staff, and third-country nationals to be fully vaccinated for COVID-19 as a condition of their physical presence at diplomatic facilities abroad.¹⁹⁷

COVID-19 pandemic mitigation restrictions remained in effect during the quarter for all personnel accessing the Baghdad embassy compound, Baghdad Diplomatic Support Center, and Consulate General Erbil.¹⁹⁸ The restrictions limited activities for embassy personnel on the compound, reduced access to the compound for non-embassy personnel, and restricted movement of staff between compounds. The embassy continued to postpone some critical work functions until local staff can return to work. All personnel were subject to a mandatory quarantine when arriving from abroad.¹⁹⁹ The pandemic slowed construction projects for a time, but all ongoing construction efforts returned to full contractor staffing with COVID-19 mitigation protocols in place.²⁰⁰





Members of the all-female Yazidi Company of the Kurdish Security Forces participate in various training activities at the Zeravani Tigers Training Center, Erbil, Iraq. (U.S. Army photo)

IRAQ

- 28 Security
- 47 Politics and Economics
- 55 Stabilization
- 59 Humanitarian Assistance

IRAQ

U.S. strategic priorities in Iraq include reforming and strengthening the Iraqi Security Forces (ISF), supporting the development of a capable and responsive Iraqi government, building a strong Iraqi Kurdistan Region, encouraging economic reform, and providing support to vulnerable communities as they transition from stabilization to recovery.²⁰¹

SECURITY

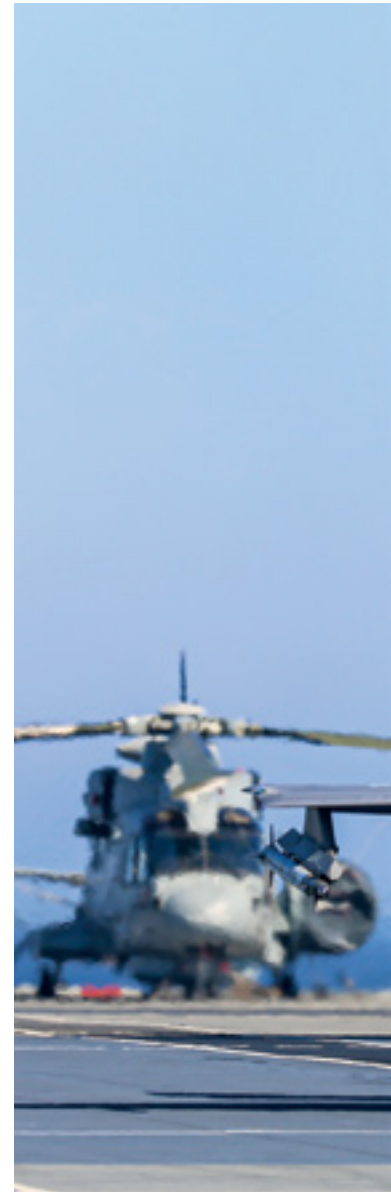
During Phase IV, Combined Joint Task Force–Operation Inherent Resolve (CJTF-OIR) has shifted from tactical-level advising and support during ISF ground operations to providing limited training and advising. Coalition advisers continue to provide intelligence and air support to ISF ground operations targeting ISIS. CJTF-OIR’s advisory efforts seek to enhance the skills that the ISF requires to build an independent military and execute independent operations against ISIS.²⁰²

The Coalition supports many elements within the Iraqi Security Forces (ISF)—including the Iraqi Army and Air Force, the Counter Terrorism Service (CTS), and the Kurdistan Regional Government’s (KRG) Peshmerga forces—and the Iraqi Ministry of Defense. CJTF-OIR primarily advises and enables the ISF at two centralized command centers: the Joint Operations Command–Iraq (JOC-I) at Union III in Baghdad and the Kurdish Coordination Center in Erbil. In addition to these two locations, CJTF-OIR supports partner forces from the Diplomatic Support Center at Baghdad International Airport and the al-Asad Air Base in Anbar province.²⁰³

COALITION ACTIVITY

Coalition Aircraft Target ISIS Hideouts

Coalition aircraft continued to support ISF operations against ISIS this quarter. CJTF-OIR reported that it conducted two airstrikes in Iraq in April and nine airstrikes in May.²⁰⁴ (See Figure 2.) Final airstrike tallies for June were not available.



SELECTED KEY EVENTS, APRIL 1, 2021–JUNE 30, 2021

APRIL 7

The United States and Iraq reaffirm their “strong relationship” during the latest meeting of the Strategic Dialogue.

APRIL 24

A fire at the Ibn al-Khatib Hospital in Baghdad, which cares for COVID-19 patients, kills more than 80 people and injures 110 others. USAID announces a grant to support rebuilding efforts.

MAY 8

ISIS kills three Kurdish Peshmerga in Kirkuk, one of several attacks against Peshmerga and ISF forces that prompted greater coordination between ISF and Peshmerga forces.

APR

APRIL 14

Iran-aligned militias conduct their first-ever fixed-wing, explosive-laden unmanned aerial vehicle attacks (UAV) against U.S. interests in Iraq.

MAY

MAY 4

A U.S. delegation meets with Iraqi government leaders in Baghdad and Erbil, the first high-level visit of the new Biden Administration to affirm the U.S.-Iraq partnership.

U.S. Marine F-35B Lightning IIs operate from the flight deck of HMS Queen Elizabeth. (DoD photo)



MAY 9

Activist and anticorruption campaigner Ehab Jawad al-Wazni is murdered by unknown assailants, sparking protests throughout the country.

JUNE 5

ISF and Peshmerga forces conduct the first joint operation along the Kurdistan Coordination Line in northern Iraq.

MAY 25

The Iraqi government safely repatriates 93 Iraqi families from the al-Hol displaced persons camp in northeast Syria.

JUNE 27

The United States launches airstrikes targeting Iran-aligned militias in western Iraq and Syria.

JUN

U.S. military forces conduct defensive precision strikes on a facility used by Iran-backed militia groups as a coordination center for the shipment and transfer of advanced conventional weapons. (DoD video capture)

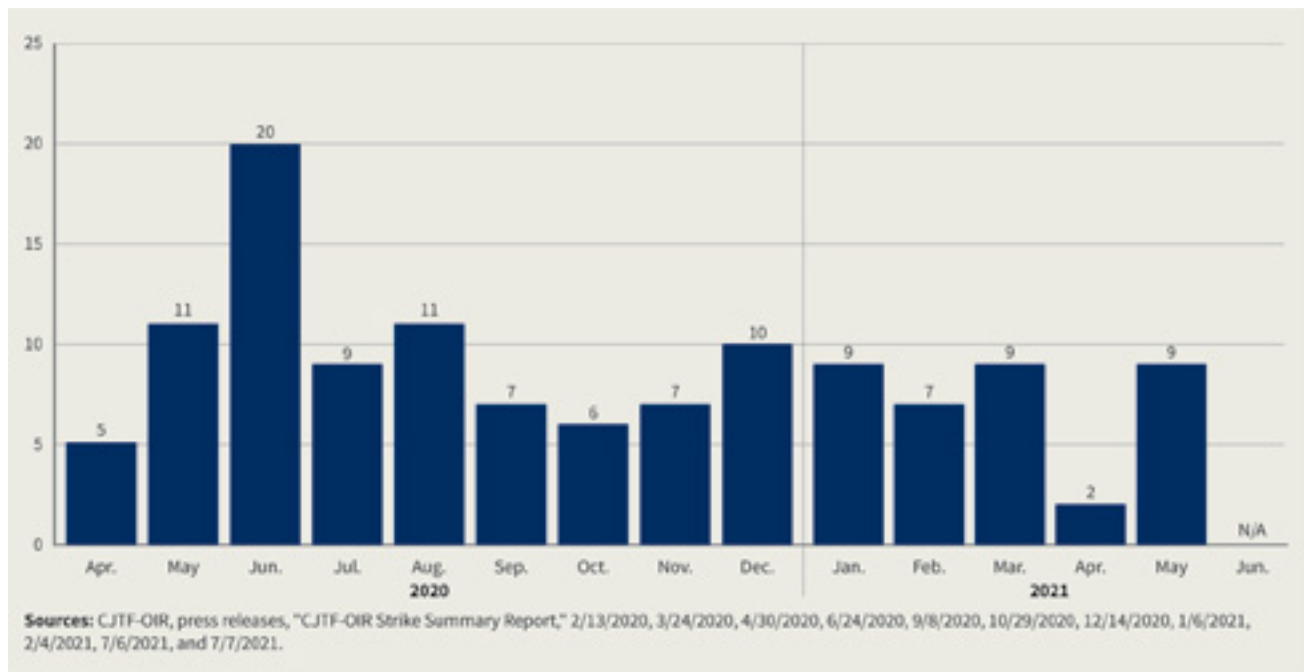


CJTF-OIR said that the nine airstrikes in May targeted ISIS in the Hamrin mountains in northern Iraq and destroyed five ISIS hideouts.²⁰⁵ According to local news reports, the airstrikes followed an uptick in ISIS activity in the Hamrin mountains, including multiple ISIS attacks that killed at least a dozen ISF and Peshmerga soldiers.²⁰⁶

According to a media report, in June, British and American F-35 fighters flew missions in support of counter-ISIS operations from a British aircraft carrier. The sorties were the first fixed-wing combat operations launched from a British aircraft carrier in almost a decade.²⁰⁷

Figure 2.

Coalition Airstrikes Targeting ISIS in Iraq, April 2020–June 2021



Strategic Dialogue Reaffirms Relationship

The United States and Iraq reaffirmed their determination to strengthen the strategic relationship during the final session of the Strategic Dialogue. The delegations of the Republic of Iraq, led by Dr. Fuad Hussein, Iraq's Minister of Foreign Affairs, and the United States of America, led by Secretary of State Antony J. Blinken, cochaired the final session of the Strategic Dialogue, initiated on June 11, 2020. The Iraqi delegation also included representatives of the Kurdistan Regional Government. The discussions covered regional stability, public health, climate change, energy independence, humanitarian aid, human rights, and economic cooperation, among other issues.²⁰⁸

The delegations decided, following recent technical talks, that the security relationship will fully transition to a training, advising, assisting, and intelligence-sharing role, and that there will be no U.S. forces with a combat role in Iraq by December 31, 2021.²⁰⁹ The United States intends to continue its support for the ISF and the Peshmerga, to build their capacity to deal with future threats.²¹⁰ Press sources estimated the number of noncombatant troops remaining in Iraq to provide advise and assist support to Iraq's security forces will remain at approximately 2,500, the current level.²¹¹ Prime Minister al-Kadhimi said, according to a media report, that Iraq is moving toward self-sufficiency, although Iraqi officials acknowledged that they still need support from the U.S. and Coalition forces for training and advisory tasks.²¹²

PARTNER FORCES CAPABILITY AND DEVELOPMENT

Iraqi Forces Improve Internal Communications

As in previous quarters, the Coalition's Military Advisory Group (MAG) continued to provide operational-level advice to ISF leadership at the JOC-I in Baghdad.²¹³ CJTF-OIR reported that subject-matter experts advised the ISF across warfighting functions, including intelligence, operations, fires support, and sustainment.²¹⁴ MAG advisors also advised the ISF on the use of organic Iraqi capabilities, prioritizing resources, and developing plans to execute operations against ISIS.²¹⁵

CJTF-OIR reported that the JOC-I improved its ability to rely on its own command and control structures. As a result, during the quarter the JOC-I reduced the number of operational command liaison officers that had been stationed at headquarters to assist with communication between the two teams. Instead, the JOC-I communicated directly with the ISF's regional operational commands. The MAG formally decommissioned its corresponding operational commands advisor teams on June 30.²¹⁶ CJTF-OIR said that the liaisons and advisor teams were implemented as temporary "bridging" measures while CJTF-OIR transitioned from the operational-level support executed by Task Force-Iraq to the centralized advising now executed by the MAG.²¹⁷

CJTF-OIR reported that it did not experience any decrease in operational tempo or effectiveness due to the reduced number of Iraqi liaison officers or the termination of the corresponding Coalition advisors, and described the relationship between the MAG and the JOC-I as "very strong."²¹⁸

JOC-I leaders occasionally met with PMF and Tribal Mobilization Forces (TMF) personnel to maintain awareness of each other's operations. CJTF-OIR said that the PMF and TMF

do not maintain liaison officers at ISF headquarters in Baghdad because U.S. and Coalition personnel are prohibited from coordinating directly with PMF and TMF personnel.²¹⁹ Iraqi operational command staff occasionally met with PMF operations planners and coordinated directly with regional PMF counterparts.²²⁰ However, CJTF-OIR said that the JOC-I leadership does not advertise these meetings or invite Coalition members to participate.²²¹ CJTF-OIR reported that the absence of PMF and TMF liaison officers did not impact operations against ISIS.²²²

CJTF-OIR said that the ISF’s capability to conduct search and clearance operations “had improved.”

Iraqi Security Forces Demonstrate “Improved” Capability

CJTF-OIR reported that during the quarter, conventional army forces in the ISF continued to conduct ground clearance operations, static security operations, helicopter assault force operations, and interdiction operations through routine, single-command operations and periodic multi-command operations. CJTF-OIR said that the ISF’s capability to conduct search and clearance operations “had improved.”²²³

Some ISF clearance operations sought to prevent ISIS from using hideout locations along the Tigris River and Diyala River as staging or “retrograde areas” for future operations.²²⁴ Additionally, according to media reports, in May the Iraqi Army launched an operation against ISIS in Salah ad Din province following an ISIS attack that killed two members of the PMF.²²⁵ According to the news reports, the PMF joined the Iraqi Army in the operation in the north of the province.²²⁶

During Ramadan, which began in Iraq on April 13 and ended on May 12, the ISF were approximately 21 percent less active than during other times throughout the quarter.²²⁷ CJTF-OIR reported no “appreciable impact” due to the reduction in operations during this period, and noted that ISF operations continued to result in the death of ISIS fighters throughout areas of northern and western Iraq.²²⁸

CJTF-OIR said that the ISF often incorporated Iraqi Air Force and Army Aviation Command airstrikes into their multi-command operations and were able to deny ISIS access to terrain from which they have historically operated.²²⁹ Operations were independent of Coalition ground support, CJTF-OIR said.²³⁰

ISF OPERATIONS OCCURRED DURING THE DAY, WHILE ISIS OPERATED AT NIGHT

ISF operations occurred primarily during daylight hours while ISIS fighters operated under cover of darkness to limit their exposure, CJTF-OIR said.²³¹ CJTF-OIR said that the ISF search and clearance operations served as a means to deter criminal and illegal activity and demonstrate the ISF’s support to the population.²³²

CJTF-OIR said that while the ISF have shown the capability to conduct their own ISR and airstrikes using F-16s and AC/RC-208s, ISF commanders continued to request Coalition support with ISR throughout the quarter.²³³

While CJTF-OIR reported that the ISF’s ability to conduct joint combined arms operations improved, the ISF did not provide feedback to the Coalition on ISF execution of combined arms operations involving infantry, armor, and artillery. Instead, CJTF-OIR assessed the

CJTF-OIR reported that the ISF “displays a limited ability to secure its border with Syria.”

effectiveness of Iraqi operations at a general level through nightly briefs with the Joint Operational Command leadership and through weekly operations and intelligence briefs. CJTF-OIR uses this information to create a macro picture of the effects of operations against ISIS and ISF battlespace capability.²³⁴ The ISF rarely discussed logistics and sustainment operations, and CJTF-OIR said that the Iraqis resolve these issues internally with no further discussion with the Coalition.²³⁵

ISF Steps Up Efforts to Curb ISIS Cross-border Activity

CJTF-OIR reported that the ISF “displays a limited ability to secure its border with Syria.”²³⁶ This limitation hinders the ISF and allows ISIS fighters and affiliated family members to slip across the border from Syria into Iraq in small groups.²³⁷

The DIA reported that ISIS often exploits security gaps along the border to create facilitation and smuggling routes.²³⁸ CJTF-OIR said that family members often arrive in Iraq prior to adult male fighters to establish “bed down locations” and help move fighters to ISIS’s geographic strongholds.²³⁹

During the quarter, the Iraqi government, with Coalition support, took steps to improve control of the border. According to media reports, the Iraqi government installed new equipment along the border and coordinated operations with the U.S.-backed SDF, which operate along the Syrian side of the border.²⁴⁰

Iraqi news sources reported in April that the Iraqi Army launched a campaign to close illegal crossings along the Iraqi-Syrian border, primarily around the al-Qa’im crossing in Iraq’s Anbar province.²⁴¹ In May, the SDF and Coalition forces launched an operation in Syria that sought to capture ISIS militants moving across the border, according to media reports.²⁴² The operation included digging trenches, building watchtowers, and using drones and thermal detection cameras to catch people trying to cross the border.²⁴³

CJTF-OIR said that Iraq’s border guard dug a trench to prevent traffic from crossing the border.²⁴⁴ The DoD used CTEF funds to provide the border guard with materials to construct barriers along the Syrian border, including 880 kilometers of barbed wire, 450 kilometers of concertina wire, 120,000 metal fence posts, 50 fence post drivers, and 50 pairs of gloves, according to CJTF-OIR.²⁴⁵ CJTF-OIR plans to provide additional concertina wire that the border guards will use to force smugglers into areas that provide the ISF a geographic advantage, including the legal crossing points of al-Rabiah and al-Qa’im.²⁴⁶

CJTF-OIR reported that ISF operations mostly target the flow of ISIS fighters and weapons into Iraq, rather than out of Iraq.²⁴⁷ Moreover, the Iraqi Border Ports Authority faces budget reductions. The DIA reported that the Iraqi parliament decreased the agency’s budget from \$32.5 million in 2019 to \$31.2 million in 2021.²⁴⁸ CJTF-OIR said that rampant corruption plagues the border crossings, allowing smugglers to traffic fighters and supplies.²⁴⁹

Additionally, Iraqi militias that operate largely outside of Iraq’s security structure continued to complicate efforts to secure the border. The DIA reported that as of June, the PMF likely maintained positions on the Iraq-Syria border, despite Iraqi government efforts in 2020 to reduce the militias’ presence. PMF militias largely control Iraq’s border with Iran;

the militias informally control a number of border entry points and threaten state officials seeking to rein in their activities, the DIA said.²⁵⁰

ISIS is also active along Iraq's border with Saudi Arabia. According to local media reports, Iraq's Ministry of Interior arrested the commander of a Border Guard battalion and two other security chiefs following an ISIS attack this quarter on a border crossing into the kingdom. The report said that Iraqi security forces withdrew without a fight after ISIS elements attacked the crossing, enabling ISIS fighters to take weapons and equipment, including vehicles.²⁵¹

In addition to Iraqi measures to secure the Iraq border, U.S. European Command (USEUCOM) reported that Turkey also took steps during quarter—including raids and detentions of ISIS fighters—to curb cross-border ISIS activity emanating from Turkish soil.²⁵² USEUCOM said that these activities and sustained Turkish security presence along the border with Iraq have reduced ISIS's ability to conduct and support attacks within and from Turkey.²⁵³

CJTF-OIR reported that Iraq's premier special operations force, the CTS, conducted more than 100 operations across Iraq during the quarter.

CTS Expands Operational Partnering with Other ISF Elements

CJTF-OIR reported that Iraq's premier special operations force, the CTS, conducted more than 100 operations across Iraq during the quarter. CTS operations ranged from small, warrant-based pinpoint raids to capture low-level ISIS-affiliated persons to brigade-sized operations that integrated Iraqi air assets and required significant synchronization and coordination between CTS, Coalition, and Peshmerga forces. CJTF-OIR said that a nascent, but important shift this quarter was the CTS' increased use of Iraqi Air Force aircraft to support operations. Notably, CTS also conducted a joint operation with the Peshmerga against ISIS along the Kurdistan Coordination Line. CJTF-OIR stated that the operations represented a significant development in uniting Iraq's national security forces and set conditions for future cooperation between the CTS and the Peshmerga (see page 35).²⁵⁴

CJTF-OIR reported that during the quarter, Coalition advisors provided training and advising to the CTS to improve the service's targeting of ISIS and operational capabilities. Coalition advisors focused on enhancing the organic intelligence capabilities of the CTS, strengthening coordination between adjacent units within the ISF, and providing oversight and feedback on the conduct of operations against ISIS.²⁵⁵ CJTF-OIR said that its advisors regularly conducted basic training courses with the CTS to reinforce infantry tactics at the battalion level. CJTF-OIR also provided larger-scale training events that focused on extending the CTS's operational reach across its areas of operation.²⁵⁶ At the institutional level, Coalition advisors sought to establish sustainable training programs to provide the CTS brigades with uniformly trained specialists, while Coalition ISR assets sought to support CTS tactical operations.²⁵⁷

According to CJTF-OIR, the CTS forensic capability continues to grow and improve. However, the CTS continued to have gaps in capability and synchronization that preclude it from conducting targeted and unilateral operations against ISIS fighters. The CTS is building its own database system to log evidence and decrease its reliance on Ministry of

Interior and Coalition systems. CJTF-OIR said that the CTS also needs to integrate forensics exploitation into its intelligence cycle to aid targeting. The current process is oriented toward prosecutions.²⁵⁸ CTS forensic capability during the quarter included latent fingerprint examination and DNA sampling.²⁵⁹

CJTF-OIR said that contractors from Pacific Architects and Engineers are providing digital forensic training to the CTS, with an expected completion date in the fourth quarter of FY 2021.²⁶⁰ In addition, CJTF-OIR reported that this quarter the Coalition's Special Operations Joint Task Force provided equipment to the CTS to enhance existing warfighting functions, including command and control capabilities, medical sustainment, and ammunition.²⁶¹ CJTF-OIR said that it procured the equipment to enhance CTS operations against ISIS following a Coalition and partner force capability analysis.²⁶²

Iraqi Security Forces and Peshmerga Conduct Joint Operation, Open New Coordination Centers

In June, Peshmerga and Iraqi Security Forces conducted their first joint operation against ISIS in an area known as the Kurdistan Coordination Line, a swath of disputed area in northern Iraq.²⁶³ The operation took place in response to lethal ISIS attacks against Peshmerga positions.²⁶⁴

The joint operation was the first conducted since Peshmerga and ISF forces set up coordination centers in Erbil and Baghdad in October 2020 to counter ISIS. CJTF-OIR reported that the operation sought to deny ISIS the freedom to maneuver and critical lines of communication, and its initial success would likely lead to additional joint operations aimed at addressing the security gaps along the line.²⁶⁵

CJTF-OIR reported that the security gap has enabled ISIS to move weapons and fighters into key areas in Iraq, and that ISIS endures partly because of the distance between ISF and Peshmerga checkpoints along the coordination line.²⁶⁶ CJTF-OIR said that joint patrols are “critical” to closing the seam, and that cooperation between the two forces is the “only mechanism” to disrupt ISIS facilitation routes.²⁶⁷

According to media reports, Kurdish leaders have long sought greater cooperation between Peshmerga and ISF forces to curb ISIS activity in Kurdish-controlled areas of northern Iraq but several issues have prevented the two sides from conducting joint operations.²⁶⁸ CJTF-OIR reported that the Peshmerga refuse to cooperate with the PMF, whose presence in the area exacerbates the security gap between the ISF and the Peshmerga.²⁶⁹

During the quarter, Iraqi Kurdistan Region President Nechirvan Barzani called on Iraq's central government to coordinate anti-ISIS efforts following a lethal attack on the Peshmerga.²⁷⁰ CJTF-OIR reported that calls by leading Kurdish and Iraqi political figures for increased coordination led to the joint operation between the ISF and Unit 70, an element of the Peshmerga associated with Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (PUK).²⁷¹

In addition to the joint operation, CJTF-OIR reported that the two sides made “great strides” during the quarter with the establishment of four new Joint Coordination Centers located in Diyala, Kirkuk, Makhmur, and Ninewa in addition to the facilities in Baghdad and Erbil.²⁷²

The new centers were quickly established after receiving broad political support following the ISIS attacks on Peshmerga positions.²⁷³ CJTF-OIR characterized the centers as a major Coalition objective and a “significant milestone” in the ability of the ISF and Peshmerga to fight ISIS together.²⁷⁴

Peshmerga Conduct Operations Against ISIS This Quarter

Peshmerga forces conducted several successful independent and Coalition-partnered counter-ISIS operations during the quarter, CJTF-OIR said.²⁷⁵ Kurdish counter-terrorism forces and the Asayish internal security force arrested dozens of ISIS fighters and broke up at least two large ISIS networks operating in the Iraqi Kurdistan Region.²⁷⁶ Additionally, Peshmerga forces conducted independent, low-level daily patrols across Iraqi Kurdistan, CJTF-OIR said.²⁷⁷

CJTF-OIR reported that Kurdish special operations forces, known as the Counter Terrorism Group (CTG) and the Counter Terrorism Directorate (CTD), conducted the majority of Peshmerga operations during the quarter as the lead in partnered operations

Table 2.

Peshmerga Operations Against ISIS, April 1–June 6, 2021

Start Date	Operation Type	Force	Operation Partnered with Coalition, ISF, Other	Operation Enabled with Coalition or ISF Support
April 6	Collection	Unit 80	Coalition	
April 7	Deliberate Detention Operation	CTD	Coalition	
April 13	Collection	Unit 80	Coalition	
April 15	Raid	Unit 70 CDOs	National Mission Authority	
April 21	Reconnaissance	Unit 70	Coalition	
April 23	Raid	CTG	Coalition	
April 29	Reconnaissance	Unit 70	Coalition	
May 6	Collection	Unit 80	Coalition	
May 8	Clearance	Zervani		
May 10	Collection	Unit 80	Coalition	
May 11	Collection	Unit 80	Coalition	
May 15	Unspecified	CTD	Coalition	
May 29	Collection	Unit 70 CDOs	National Mission Authority	Enabled with Coalition support
June 4	Raid	CTD	Coalition	
June 5	Offensive Clearing Operation	Unit 70 CDOs	Coalition	Enabled with ISF and Coalition support
June 6	Raid	Unit 70 CDOs	Coalition and ISF	

Source: CJTF-OIR, response to DoD OIG request for information, 21.3 OIR 057, 6/24/2021.

CJTF-OIR said the number of Regional Guard Brigades was expected to grow as 8,100 Peshmerga are transferred from KDP Unit 80 to the Ministry of Peshmerga Affairs.

with Coalition forces.²⁷⁸ Peshmerga “Zeravani” forces—military forces with law enforcement duties among the civilian population—conducted one ground operation independent of the Coalition and the ISF.²⁷⁹ (See Table 2.)

The Peshmerga is comprised of the Regional Guard Brigades, Unit 70 Forces, Unit 80 Forces, the Zeravani and Emergency Response Forces, and the Asayish, as well as the counterterrorism forces. CJTF-OIR reported that all Peshmerga forces maintain the ability to conduct successful counter-ISIS operations.²⁸⁰

The Regional Guard Brigades operate under the Ministry of Peshmerga Affairs. As of this quarter, there were roughly 32,000 soldiers assigned to 16 brigades, three ministry training facilities, and ministry headquarters.²⁸¹ Unit 70, estimated at 45,000 to 50,000, and the Counter Terrorism Group are associated with the PUK political party. Unit 80, estimated at 65,000 to 70,000, and the Counter Terrorism Directorate are associated with the Kurdistan Democratic Party (KDP).²⁸²

CJTF-OIR said the number of Regional Guard Brigades was expected to grow as 8,100 Peshmerga are transferred from KDP Unit 80 to the Ministry of Peshmerga Affairs. KDP Unit 80 plans to transfer two additional brigades to the ministry next quarter.²⁸³

CJTF-OIR reported that Coalition forces partnered with KDP Unit 80 during five intelligence operations, and PUK Unit 70 during two intelligence operations. Coalition forces also partnered with the Counter Terrorism Department for three ground operations and PUK Unit 70 commandos and Counter Terrorism Group each for one ground operation.²⁸⁴

Peshmerga Stipends Set to Catch Up in July

CJTF-OIR reported that the Ministry of Peshmerga Affairs received the final lump sum of CTEF stipends in June, allowing the ministry to distribute back pay owed to the Regional Guard Brigades for services in March, April, and May 2021.²⁸⁵

CJTF-OIR suspended the CTEF-funded Peshmerga stipend program in 2020 in anticipation of a drawdown of counteroffensive operations.²⁸⁶ However, CJTF-OIR resumed the program in March 2021 for properly vetted Regional Guard Brigades. On March 31, the ministry received stipends totaling \$50,862,477 to pay brigade personnel for September, October, and November 2020. On May 27, the ministry received \$51,137,930 for services in December 2020, January 2021, and February 2021. On June 24, the ministry received \$52,791,545 for services in March, April, and May 2021.²⁸⁷

CJTF-OIR reported that as of June, the stipends program was on track to resume in July 2021 for services in June, and payments will revert back to a single-month sum as opposed to the current processing of 3-month lump payments required to make up for unpaid time.²⁸⁸

The Peshmerga stipend program is based on a memorandum of understanding with the KRG, and only allows CJTF-OIR to pay stipends (which initially flow through the Iraqi government to the KRG), to nonpartisan units under the control of the Ministry of Peshmerga Affairs.²⁸⁹ CJTF-OIR reported that because KDP Unit 80 and PUK Unit 70 do not meet the nonpartisan criteria of the memorandum, it is restricted from providing stipend support to these units.²⁹⁰

Iraqi Air Force Capabilities Remain Steady

During the quarter, the MAG’s air advisors continued to work toward increasing the ISF’s use of its own ISR and strike platforms. To further develop Iraq’s aerial capabilities, the objectives of the MAG’s fire support and intelligence advisors this quarter included supporting the creation of an ISF targeting cell, encouraging the creation of a strike cell within the JOC-I, and reinforcing the link between the JOC-I intelligence director and the air cell to implement ISR priorities.²⁹¹

CJTF-OIR reported that the Iraqi Air Enterprise, comprising fixed-wing aircraft from the Iraqi Air Force and rotary-wing aircraft from the Iraqi Army Aviation Command, remained capable of conducting strikes during the quarter.²⁹² CJTF-OIR acknowledged that there have been “no appreciable changes” to the Iraqi Air Enterprise’s capabilities from the previous quarter, but highlighted progress with the Iraqi Air Force’s ability to coordinate with the CTS to conduct air strikes.²⁹³

According to CJTF-OIR, the total mission capable rate of Iraq’s fleet of 206 aircraft remained steady at about 50 percent overall this quarter. (See Figure 3.) While the availability of aircraft coded for training decreased from 89 percent to 72 percent, mission availability of aircraft coded for combat remained steady at about 43 percent.²⁹⁴ By

Figure 3.

Iraqi Air Enterprise Mission Capable Rates, April – June 5, 2021

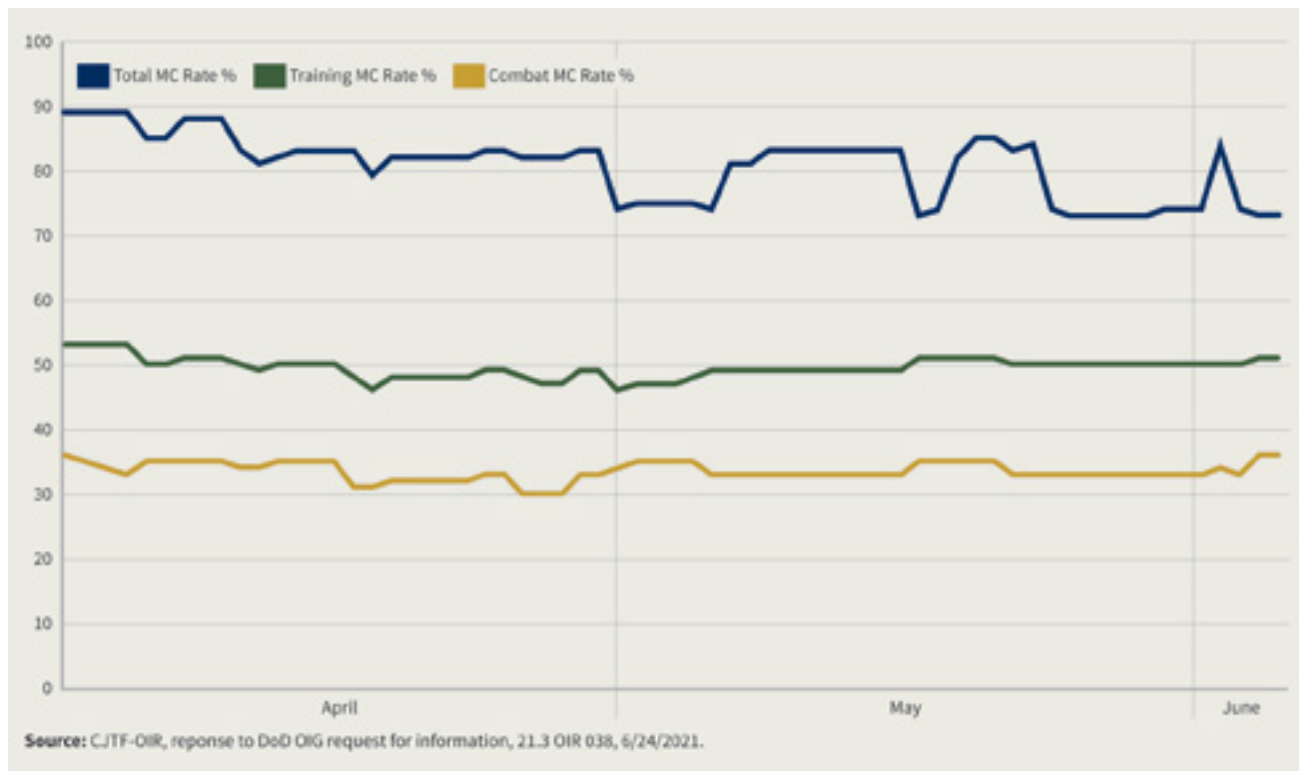
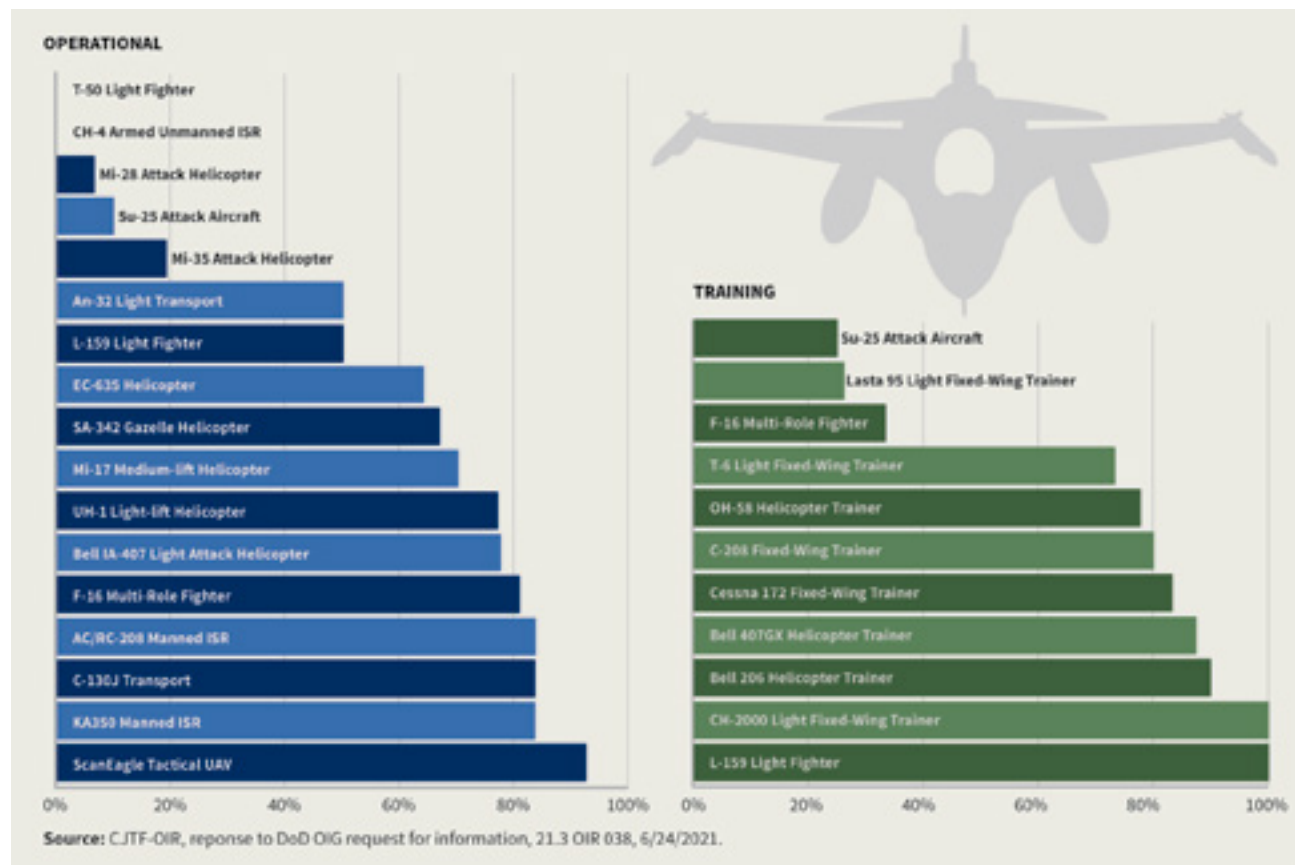


Figure 4.

Iraqi Aircraft Availability, May–June 2021

comparison, the U.S. Air Force maintained an overall mission capable rate of 70 percent in FY 2019.²⁹⁵ Figure 4 shows average monthly availability of Iraqi aircraft by type.

CJTF-OIR: Evacuation of U.S. Contractors Has No “Immediate” Impact on Iraq’s F-16 Program

Lockheed Martin contractors supporting Iraq’s F-16 program again departed Balad Air Base during the quarter due to the deteriorating security environment. Some contractors had only recently returned after threats last quarter caused a similar evacuation.²⁹⁶ CJTF-OIR reported that Lockheed Martin maintained a team of approximately 25 contractors in Erbil to support the Iraqi F-16 program and provided additional remote support from the United States. CJTF-OIR added that Lockheed Martin intends to move contractors between Erbil and Balad Air Base for day trips as required to support F-16 operations and maintenance.²⁹⁷

CJTF-OIR reported that the departure of U.S. contractors from Balad had no immediate effect on operational sorties flown by Iraq’s F-16 multirole fighters. According to CJTF-OIR, the Iraqi Air Force’s F-16s conducted 13 operational missions during the quarter, with

11 strikes conducted.²⁹⁸ This quarter’s strikes used a combination of GBU-12 and GBU-10 laser-guided bombs as well as Mk-82 unguided bombs. CJTF-OIR said the increase in strike sorties is directly attributed to the Iraqi Air Force’s work with CTS. In addition to the operational sorties flown, Iraqi F-16s conducted an average of 4.4 daily training sorties.²⁹⁹

Additionally, the Iraqi Air Force demonstrated “marked improvement” in using its own reconnaissance and fire support capabilities to perform air strikes, according to CJTF-OIR.³⁰⁰ Iraqi C-208s and KA-350s ISR aircraft continue to fly reconnaissance sorties in support of Iraqi Air Force strikes.³⁰¹ However, the effort to create dynamic strike capabilities in coordination with CTS instead produced only deliberate strike capabilities due to the level of authorization required for Iraqi strike missions.³⁰² A dynamic strike capability would allow the Iraqi Air Force to conduct precision strikes in urgent unplanned situations, including for close air support of ground forces in combat or targets of opportunity, while deliberate strikes largely involve preplanned strikes on specific targets.³⁰³ CJTF-OIR conceded that while this was not the stated goal for bringing together F-16s from the Iraqi Air Force’s 9th Fighter Squadron and Iraqi Terminal Attack Controllers (ITACs) within CTS, it resulted in a process where Iraqi F-16s in conjunction with Iraqi Special Operations Forces are capable of conducting strikes.³⁰⁴

The Iraqi Air Force demonstrated “marked improvement” in using its own reconnaissance and fire support capabilities to perform air strikes, according to CJTF-OIR.

Training of CTS Tactical Air Controllers Expands Iraqi Air Force Capabilities

CJTF-OIR reported that the Operations Directorate of the Iraqi Air Staff agreed in February to initiate training between CTS ITACs, and Iraq’s F-16, C-208, L-159, and Su-25 units. Since then the Iraqi CTS and Iraqi Air Force have pursued an aggressive timeline that included classroom close air support training and range training for the units at the Besmaya training range. CJTF-OIR said that due largely to the involvement of Iraqi Special Operations Forces, Iraqi F-16s were conducting air strikes in coordination with CTS ITACs by the end of March. CJTF-OIR added that even after the departure of Lockheed Martin contractors in mid-May, the F-16s remained capable of striking targets in conjunction with CTS.³⁰⁵

CJTF-OIR said that Iraqi Air Force units operating Russian-made Su-25 attack aircraft have also been eager to work with the CTS ITACs. While Iraqi Su-25s are not capable of delivering precision-guided munitions, the added volume of training has accelerated the CTS ITAC’s ability to complete their training. The CTS ITACs are the only ISF ground units CJTF-OIR is tracking with a requirement for close air support training.³⁰⁶

CJTF-OIR reported that in May, it provided close air support training to the Iraqi Air Force’s 115th Fighter Squadron, which operates Czech-made L-159 light attack aircraft. Nine pilots received academic training and performed “dry” close air support flight training. CJTF-OIR reported that the L-159s are capable of conducting strike missions and the squadron is able to fly operational sorties. However, CJTF-OIR said that because the F-16 fleet has been able to support the volume of strikes required of the Iraqi Air Force, it is unlikely the L-159s will be used for much more than training until their targeting pods are installed in the 4th quarter of FY 2022.³⁰⁷ CJTF-OIR reported that a few L-159s are now mission ready despite maintenance contract challenges. However, L-159 pilots will not begin requalification until next quarter.³⁰⁸

CJTF-OIR reported that Iraqi Air Force sorties are still not tracked on the Coalition's air tasking order, which assigns and tracks sorties for the various Coalition aircraft supporting operations in theater.

Meanwhile, CJTF-OIR reported that Iraqi Air Force sorties are still not tracked on the Coalition's air tasking order, which assigns and tracks sorties for the various Coalition aircraft supporting operations in theater. CJTF-OIR explained that Iraqi Air Force integration into the Coalition air tasking order is not required by U.S. forces, and has not been specifically requested by Iraq. However, the Iraqi Air Force hopes to conduct aerial refueling training with Coalition tankers that routinely fly over Iraq. Adding Iraqi F-16s to the Coalition air tasking order is one of the prerequisites to conducting the training. CJTF-OIR said that the Combined Air Operations Center, which commands and controls U.S. and Coalition aircraft in theater, is provided with enough information to add Iraqi aircraft to the tasking order at this time, but that presently all Iraqi F-16 pilots lack current proficiency with aerial refueling. Any aerial refueling opportunities will be on hold for Iraqi pilots until they are able to fly in a formation with a pilot approved to conduct refueling and can assist in refamiliarizing them with the maneuver. CJTF-OIR added that while the Iraqi Air Force has its own scheduling process for Coalition air support, the MAG will provide air tasking order training for Iraqi officers in August.³⁰⁹

ISF Intelligence Continues to Struggle with Targeting and Information Sharing

CJTF-OIR reported that ISF intelligence officers still struggled to collect, analyze, and target at the tactical and operational levels due to the lack of a mechanism to prioritize ISR support. CJTF-OIR also stated that intelligence fusion is lacking between ISF bases, operational commands, service components, echelons of command, and with national agencies. The Coalition continued to interface with ISF intelligence during the quarter to improve its capabilities. CJTF-OIR said that its coordination included starting weekly analytic exchanges with Iraq's seven core national intelligence agencies as well as instructing introductory and intermediate courses on target development, ISR collections, and analysis.³¹⁰

CJTF-OIR reported that the ISF remains dependent on Coalition ISR for aerial surveillance and targeting, but that the MAG's air advisors continued to encourage the Iraqi Air Force to conduct ISR sorties with their assets in order to gain experience and confidence.³¹¹ CJTF-OIR said that while the Iraqi Air Force's manned King Air 350 and C-208 ISR aircraft routinely fly and are capable platforms, they have limited persistence capability and are much louder than Coalition ISR platforms.³¹²

Meanwhile, CJTF-OIR stated that Iraq's ScanEagle tactical UAVs did not fly in support of ISR collection during the quarter but that the aircraft were 100 percent mission ready.³¹³ However, CJTF-OIR said last quarter that the Iraqis operating the ScanEagles had reported electromagnetic interference that prevented safe operations.³¹⁴ According to CJTF-OIR, the ScanEagles were awaiting contract adjustments through the U.S. Foreign Military Sales process prior to resuming operations.³¹⁵ CJTF-OIR expects on-site field service representatives to be in place by the end of 2021 with an anti-jamming solution set for implementation in early 2022.³¹⁶ Iraq's Chinese-made CH-4 UAVs also did not fly this quarter.³¹⁷

According to CJTF-OIR, only when Coalition ISR is unavailable will the ISF deviate from their priorities to support combined target development efforts with the Coalition in order to justify a strike request.³¹⁸ MAG and U.S. Air Force Central advisors continued to work

toward establishing an Intel Target Development Cell within the JOC-I to improve use of ISF ISR assets and production of appropriate target packages for Iraqi F-16 strike sorties.³¹⁹ CJTF-OIR reported that Coalition advisors taught introductory and intermediate-level targeting seminars to improve understanding among JOC-I general officers and staff of the appropriate targeting processes. The Coalition also helped create a formal request from the JOC-I intelligence director to JOC-I leadership to establish the Target Development Cell.³²⁰

Ordered Departure Limited OSC-I Activity

More than 90 percent of the Office of Security Cooperation-Iraq (OSC-I) staff were absent from Iraq at the beginning of the quarter, due to the DoS ordered departure of personnel from the U.S. Embassy in Baghdad and the Baghdad Diplomatic Support Center. The DoS added that the temporary displacement of 95 diplomats to other facilities in the region and to Washington, D.C., greatly affected morale and efficacy of security cooperation programs and portfolios.³²¹ Of the displaced personnel, OSC-I sent more than 40 of its military members to Camp Arifjan, Kuwait, to provide “over-the-horizon” security assistance support to the ISF.³²² According to the DoS, this severely degraded environment left the OSC-I chief and one other case manager at the U.S. Embassy in Baghdad, while everyone else remained in Kuwait for more than 5 months. However, the DoS said OSC-I fully returned in three tranches in April and May 2021.³²³

According to USCENTCOM, the absence of OSC-I personnel prevented some interactions with the Iraqi government in support of the development of Iraqi ministerial capacity. The ordered departure also diminished OSC-I’s ability to analyze and address key corruption challenges and assess Iraqi force management capabilities, strategic planning, logistical and maintenance development, or budgetary policy.³²⁴

Coalition and NATO Work to Share, Coordinate Respective Training Missions

CJTF-OIR reported that its staff worked with NATO Mission Iraq (NMI) staff throughout the quarter to further develop arrangements for sharing logistic and life-support capabilities.³²⁵ The arrangements include the development of standing coordination between the command teams from each organization.³²⁶ Additionally, CJTF-OIR said that both organizations continued to analyze each other’s respective missions to differentiate roles and responsibilities for advising Iraqi government ministries and the ISF.³²⁷

According to CJTF-OIR, NMI is committed to increasing its presence in Iraq over the coming year, and is planning accordingly.³²⁸ In February, NATO expressed a willingness to incrementally expand NMI from 500 personnel to as many as 4,000 personnel at the request of the Iraqi government.³²⁹ NATO said that the expansion would include advisory and training activities beyond the greater Baghdad area.³³⁰ NATO has been present in Iraq in some capacity since 2004. It established NMI following a summit in Brussels in July 2018 at the request from the Iraqi government to scale up training and advising efforts.³³¹

While both CJTF-OIR and NMI provide training and advice to the ISF, their missions remain distinct. CJTF-OIR reported previously that it provides operational- and strategic-level advising and mentoring to the ISF through the MAG and focuses on achieving the

USCENTCOM reported that more than 90 percent of the Office of Security Cooperation-Iraq (OSC-I) staff were absent from Iraq at the beginning of the quarter, due to the DoS ordered departure of personnel from the U.S. Embassy in Baghdad and the Baghdad Diplomatic Support Center.

The DIA reported that under the new national budget passed by the Iraqi government in early April 2021, the Iraqi Ministry of Defense's budget will decrease by about 29 percent after adjusting for inflation, to \$4.7 billion.

defeat of ISIS.³³² NMI is a ministerial-level institutional development mission that provides training and advice at the institutional level and is focused on building capable Iraqi security ministries.³³³

According to a media report, Iraqi Prime Minister Mustafa al-Kadhimi reiterated in June that Iraq seeks support in the areas of training and institutional development, support to military colleges, expansion of police training programs, and specialized weapons skills training.³³⁴ During a meeting with NATO representatives, the prime minister stated that the Iraqi government no longer requires foreign combat troop support, the report said.³³⁵

Iraqi Government Reduces Budget for Security Institutions

The DIA reported that under the new national budget passed by the Iraqi government in early April 2021, the Iraqi Ministry of Defense's budget will decrease by about 26 percent after adjusting for inflation, to \$4.7 billion. Other security institutions also saw inflation-adjusted budget decreases, while the budget of the Popular Mobilization Commission (PMC), which governs the PMF militias, increased by 17 percent. The DIA assessed that the increases to the PMC budget—which has emerged as a rival to the Ministry of Defense—probably will bolster its influence and political power. Additionally, the Iraq security budget provides for a newly apportioned line item referred to as the Military Industrialization Corporation.³³⁶ (See Table 3.)

However, the DIA said that the Iraqi government applied deep cuts to procurement for the Ministry of Defense, Ministry of Interior, and PMC. The DIA warned that reduced procurement jeopardizes Iraq's national security because the ISF are chronically underfunded, lack spare parts to maintain equipment, and lack funds to train and recruit adequate personnel. To overcome budget shortages to fund maintenance programs and training, Iraq is turning to non-U.S. defense partners such as Pakistan.³³⁷

Table 3.

Iraq Budget Funding for Security Institutions, 2019 and 2021, in U.S. Dollars

Security Institution 2021	2019*	2021*	Change
Ministry of Defense	6,370,627,858	4,737,383,176	-25.6%
National Security Council	160,626,702	164,808,224	2.6%
Iraqi National Intelligence Service	177,324,334	186,756,810	5.3%
Ministry of Interior	7,928,501,216	7,188,835,401	-9.3%
Popular Mobilization Commission	1,823,861,830	2,134,107,230	17%
Counter Terrorism Service	519,208,973	415,998,941	-19.9%
Borders Ports Authority	30,960,998	31,159,103	-0.6%
Military Industrialization Corporation	—	5,683,429	—

*Note: Budget figures are adjusted for inflation so will differ from public government documents; there was no budget in 2020.

Source: DIA, response to DoD OIG request for information, 21.3 OIR 065, 6/28/2021.

Role of Third Parties

IRAN-ALIGNED MILITIAS ESCALATE ATTACKS WITH ARMED UAVS

Militias aligned with Iran continued to threaten U.S. personnel in Iraq during the quarter. The militias announced their intent last quarter to expand attacks against U.S. interests in Iraq, which according to the DIA, signaled the end of an Iranian-ordered operational pause that began fraying in late December 2020.³³⁸ The DIA reported that senior militia leaders praised the “Afghan way”—meaning violent confrontation to compel direct negotiations between U.S. officials and militias—as a method to force the U.S. personnel to leave Iraq and called this year a new phase in their confrontation that will see the use of new weapons.³³⁹

During the quarter, Iran-aligned militias escalated their attacks against U.S. interests by conducting the first ever fixed-wing, explosive-laden unmanned aerial vehicle (UAV) attacks against facilities housing U.S. personnel in Iraq.³⁴⁰ USCENTCOM reported that there were at least five UAV attacks against U.S. facilities in Iraq during the quarter.³⁴¹ The DIA said the first attack occurred against Erbil International Airport on April 14, followed by another UAV attack targeting a hangar at al-Asad Air Base on May 8. In addition, U.S. defenses destroyed two UAVs above al-Asad on June 6.³⁴²

USCENTCOM said these attacks represent the introduction of a new capability against U.S. interests in theater, adding that these attacks were almost certainly conducted by Iran-aligned militias with broad approval from Iran.³⁴³ The DIA assessed that Iran probably has expanded the parameters of militia attacks, allowing militias to use more advanced and attributable Iranian systems, including UAVs, in strikes against U.S. interests to continue pressuring the Iraqi government and the United States for a withdrawal timetable.³⁴⁴

Independent analysts reported that some of these attacks have utilized UAV designs that Iran previously supplied to Houthi forces in Yemen. According to these analysts, the militias appeared to be specifically targeting Coalition ISR assets and missile defenses based in Iraq.³⁴⁵

In response to the attacks, U.S. forces conducted defensive airstrikes on June 27, targeting Iran-aligned militia facilities that supported the UAV attacks. The DoD stated that U.S. forces struck operational and weapons storage facilities at two sites in eastern Syria and one in western Iraq. The DoD announcement noted that several Iran-backed groups used the facilities, including Kata’ib Hizbullah and Kata’ib Sayyid al-Shuhada.³⁴⁶ In a statement, the militias said four militia members were killed in the airstrikes and vowed to retaliate.³⁴⁷ According to press reporting, the strikes demonstrated a policy change by the Biden Administration where the United States will respond forcefully to militia attacks on U.S. facilities even if no American is killed or injured.³⁴⁸

Meanwhile, Iran-aligned militias continued to use more traditional methods of attack during the quarter. Since April 1 there have been nine indirect fire attacks on facilities housing U.S. personnel and 28 IED strikes against Coalition logistical convoys in Iraq.³⁴⁹ USCENTCOM stated that the number of indirect fire attacks this quarter was slightly higher than the previous quarter (6 in the previous quarter), while the number of IED attacks was lower (50 in the previous quarter). USCENTCOM said these attacks were almost certainly conducted by Iran-aligned militia groups with broad approval from Iran.³⁵⁰ The DoS reported the number of indirect fire attacks against U.S. diplomatic facilities increased during the quarter when compared to last quarter, with two indirect fire attacks occurring during the quarter.³⁵¹

MILITIA ATTACKS CONTINUE TO AFFECT OIR MISSION

The increase in attacks on U.S. forces by Iran-aligned militias continued to affect the OIR mission and U.S. diplomatic activity in Iraq. USCENTCOM and CJTF-OIR reported that the militia attacks forced the diversion of ISR assets away from missions targeting ISIS to support Coalition force protection.³⁵²

CJTF-OIR explained that although the ISF is responsible for force protection operations, it lacks ISR resources to monitor emerging security situations, such as staged demonstrations throughout Baghdad, or respond to imminent attack threats against bases housing Coalition forces. Sometimes the ISF requests ISR support and at other times CJTF-OIR will pull assets from intelligence gathering to mitigate credible or imminent threats to Coalition force protection. While CJTF-OIR stated that militia attacks on Coalition forces and convoys carrying material for the Coalition interfered with operations and distracted intelligence from counter-ISIS missions at times during the quarter, the overall impact to the OIR mission has been minimal.³⁵³

The DoS reported that the frequency of Iran-aligned militia attacks in FY 2020 and the threat of future attacks led to multiple extensions of the ordered departure status for the U.S. Embassy in Baghdad and the Baghdad Diplomatic Support Center, which began on March 25, 2020, and continued during the quarter. According to the DoS, the ongoing ordered departure caused significant reductions in the effectiveness of its programs.³⁵⁴

The DIA reported that the uptick in indirect fire attacks and UAV attacks against Iraqi installations housing U.S. equities increased tensions between the ISF and the PMC, which governs the PMF.³⁵⁵ The DIA said that ISF units have demonstrated an increased willingness to interdict some militia attacks, citing a thwarted April 8 attack on al-Asad Air Base, when Iraqi Army elements seized a truck-mounted launcher with 24 rockets aimed at the base. However, the DIA acknowledged that rocket attacks against Balad Air Base in early May caused the contracted logistics support for Iraq's F-16 fleet to withdraw, degrading the ISF's ability to maintain its predominant close air support aircraft for counterterrorism operations.³⁵⁶ The DIA said the ISF's arrest of a senior PMC official in late May further exacerbated ISF-PMC tensions, leading the PMC, Iraqi Army, and CTS to mobilize forces within Baghdad's International Zone.³⁵⁷

USCENTCOM reported that the U.S. Embassy in Baghdad and OSC-I continued to help the ISF improve security in the International Zone during the quarter. The zone hosts foreign diplomatic posts such as the U.S. Embassy as well as many of Iraq's key government ministries and offices. According to USCENTCOM, the Embassy donated eight shipping containers and excess furniture to the ISF's Special Command Division for use as housing units at checkpoints and security positions in the International Zone. The donation will provide temporary shelter for Iraqi troops actively securing the zone. USCENTCOM added that OSC-I also provided concertina and barbed wire to the ISF to reinforce barriers and gates surrounding the zone.³⁵⁸

IRAN-ALIGNED MILITIAS EXPAND ATTACKS ON IRAQ'S REGIONAL NEIGHBORS, AIDING IRAN'S STRATEGIC GOALS

Iran-aligned militias also continued to conduct attacks on Iraq's regional neighbors during the quarter. The DIA reported that on May 18, Iran-aligned militias in Iraq may have attempted a fixed-wing, explosive-laden UAV attack against Israel, which Israeli forces downed before it reached their territory. The DIA explained that such attacks support Iran's objectives of challenging key regional adversaries while gauging U.S. reaction to regional attacks.³⁵⁹

The DIA noted that Iraqi militias aligned with Iran were likely responsible for a similar UAV attack against Saudi Arabia earlier this year, based on claims made by Iran-aligned militants following the attacks. Iraqi-mediated peace talks between Saudi Arabia and Iran began in early April of this year. The DIA assessed that as negotiations continue, Iran likely will support operations by Iran-aligned militia in Iraq and the Houthi militant group in Yemen that target Saudi Arabia to compel direct talks between Saudi and Iranian officials and gain concessions on a range of issues.³⁶⁰

Additionally, the DIA said that on April 14, Iran-aligned militants likely conducted a rocket attack against Turkish forces in northern Iraq. Judging from Iranian diplomatic statements criticizing recent Turkish operations against the Kurdistan Workers Party (PKK) in northern Iraq, the DIA assessed that Iran will likely continue supporting

(continued on next page)

Role of Third Parties *(continued from previous page)*

some attacks against Turkish forces in the Iraqi Kurdistan Region, probably to prevent Turkish encroachment in areas dominated by Iran-aligned militias.³⁶¹

ARREST OF MILITIA LEADER LEADS TO STAND-OFF WITH ISF IN BAGHDAD

The DIA reported that Prime Minister al-Kadhimi continued to take an incremental approach in asserting authority over the PMC. The Prime Minister acted against individual militants or associates but stopped short of imposing widespread reforms on the PMC. Specifically, the DIA reported that in late May, Prime Minister al-Kadhimi approved the arrest of PMC official Qasim Muslih al-Khafaji based on a judicial arrest warrant for terrorism charges.³⁶²

According to the DIA, after the Interior Ministry oversaw the arrest of al-Khafaji on May 26, the PMC deployed forces around Baghdad's International Zone in a show of force against Prime Minister al-Kadhimi. The Defense Ministry and CTS responded by deploying their own forces, including U.S.-made M1A1 Abrams tanks, until the PMC withdrew its forces without confrontation.³⁶³ The DoS described the rebuff of the militia demands to release al-Khafaji as a "minor loss of prestige" for the PMF.³⁶⁴

The DIA said that the Prime Minister described the PMC's reactionary show of force as a serious violation of Iraq's constitution and stated that he would order an investigation into the PMC's movements. However, the DIA said that by early June Iraq's highest court ordered al-Khafaji's charges dismissed and his subsequent release.³⁶⁵

The DoS said that a negotiated settlement with the PMF internal security units and an apparent "lack of evidence" enabled al-Khafaji's release.³⁶⁶ The DIA assessed, however, that pressure from the PMC and their political affiliates almost certainly promoted his release. The DIA explained that the arrest warrant for al-Khafaji was issued by an investigative judge likely associated with the CTS, which conducted the arrest. Following the arrest, the case was transferred to a judge affiliated with the PMC, who released al-Khafaji following a recommendation from the Supreme Judicial Council.³⁶⁷

The DIA assessed that Prime Minister al-Kadhimi likely lacks sufficient backing to pursue a more aggressive approach toward PMC, which remains an official arm of Iraq's security apparatus, and continues to face political pressure from Shia elements to support the organization. The DIA added that as of June, the PMC and its associated militias likely maintained positions on the Iraq-Syria border, despite efforts in 2020 to reduce their presence. Additionally, the groups largely control Iraq's border with Iran, informally controlling a number of border entry points and threatening state officials seeking to rein in their activities.³⁶⁸

The DIA reported that it did not observe any notable structural changes to the PMC or the PMF during the quarter. The DIA explained that most of the Iran-aligned militias operating under the PMC still operate outside of the government's direct control, though the PMC does coordinate counter-ISIS operations with other Iraqi security forces. Iraq's 2021 federal budget allocates almost \$2.13 billion to the PMC for salaries and procurement; however, the DIA said it cannot determine what resources the Iraqi government has appropriated to U.S.-designated foreign terrorists groups operating under the PMC.³⁶⁹ These groups, including Kata'ib Hizbullah and Asa'ib Ahl al-Haq, staff six brigades, which still operate under the PMC and therefore receive Iraqi state resources.³⁷⁰

According to the DoS, the Iraqi government cannot simply dispel the Iran-aligned militias without the Iraqi parliament approving major legislation to remove the authorities that permit their existence. The DoS reported that under Iraqi law there are many regulations to control the PMF militias, but they are routinely flouted.³⁷¹



The Prime Minister of the Republic of Iraq, Mustafa Al-Kadhimi (right) meets with NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg (left). (NATO photo)

POLITICS AND ECONOMICS

The DoS said that its principal national security objective in Iraq is to bolster the country as a sovereign, stable, and democratic partner capable of fending off internal and external threats—including from Iran—and comprising a viable KRG. The U.S. Mission in Iraq engages with the Iraqi government, the KRG, international organizations, neighboring countries, economic partners, and the Iraqi people to counter Iran’s malign influence and ensure the enduring defeat of ISIS. In addition, Mission Iraq seeks to promote good governance and combat corruption; protect members of Iraq’s persecuted minority communities; improve Iraq’s ties to Jordan and the six Middle Eastern countries that make up the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC); foster economic growth and improve Iraq’s business climate; and support Iraq’s energy independence.³⁷²

U.S. Delegation Confers with Iraqi and Kurdish Government Leaders

On May 4, a U.S. delegation met with Iraqi government leaders in Baghdad and Erbil. The delegation included DoS Counselor Derek Chollet; National Security Council Coordinator for the Middle East and North Africa Brett McGurk; DoS Acting Assistant Secretary for Near Eastern Affairs Joey Hood; and DoD Deputy Assistant Secretary for the Middle East Dana Stroul. The DoS said that this was the first high-level delegation of the new Biden Administration to visit Iraq, where they affirmed the administration’s commitment to the U.S.-Iraq partnership.³⁷³

In his meeting with the U.S. delegation, Iraqi Prime Minister al-Kadhimi emphasized implementation of the U.S.-Iraq Strategic Dialogue outcomes, particularly the withdrawal of combat troops from Iraq.³⁷⁴ The U.S. delegation also met with the Speaker of the Iraqi Parliament, Mohammed al-Halbousi. During the meeting, the speaker and delegation

discussed cooperation between Iraq and the United States relating to security, the economy, commerce, and culture. The speaker stressed the importance of the outcomes of the Strategic Dialogue discussions.³⁷⁵

In Erbil, the U.S. delegation also met with KRG Prime Minister Masrour Barzani and Deputy Prime Minister Qubad Talabani. According to a Kurdish media report, the delegation affirmed the desire of the United States to strengthen relations with the Iraqi Kurdistan Region, an important U.S. partner. The delegation, the report continued, stated its support for the KRG's reform of the Ministry of Peshmerga Affairs and for Peshmerga forces in their fight against terrorism.³⁷⁶

Iraq Continues Regional Diplomatic Efforts

On June 27, Prime Minister al-Kadhimi, Egypt's President Abdel Fattah al-Sisi, and Jordan's King Abdullah II met in Baghdad for a third round of tripartite talks to discuss mutual security, trade, and economic cooperation issues. The summit was a continuation of Iraq's effort to develop closer relationships with U.S. allies in the Middle East. It was the first visit of an Egyptian head of state to Iraq in 3 decades.³⁷⁷

According to a statement released at the conclusion of the meeting, the talks focused on regional issues to improve cooperation between Iraq, Jordan, and Egypt including security, energy, investment, and trade. The leaders also discussed potential solutions to the 10-year civil war in Syria and the return of refugees.³⁷⁸ The DoS issued a statement welcoming the historic visit as an important step in strengthening regional economic and security ties and advancing regional stability.³⁷⁹

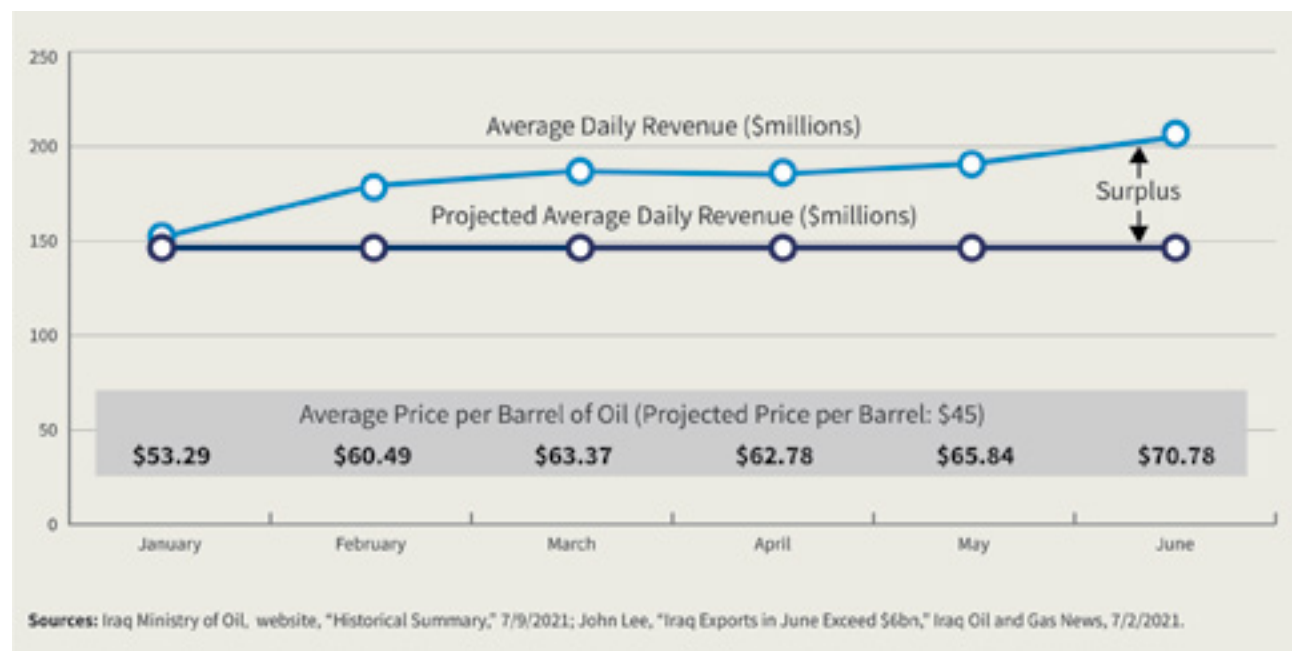
The DoS reported that Iranian and Saudi officials met in Baghdad on April 9. The two sides discussed topics including the war in Yemen and Iran-aligned militia groups operating in Iraq. Iraqi President Barham Salih confirmed on May 5 that Iraq had hosted "more than one round of talks" between Iran and Saudi Arabia.³⁸⁰ The DoS said that while it is unclear whether they are making much progress, the parties appear willing to continue talking.³⁸¹

Oil Revenues Higher than Projected, Reducing Projected Budget Deficit

On March 31, Iraq's parliament approved a 2021 budget after months of debate, overcoming major challenges and longstanding political disagreements. The new budget law preserved a currency devaluation, assumed a record-high deficit, and outlined an agreement between the central government and the KRG to share oil revenues in exchange for a portion of the national budget. The 2021 budget totals \$89.7 billion with a projected deficit of \$19.8 billion.³⁸²

From January through June 2021, oil revenues exceeded projections. (See Figure 5.) The average daily price per barrel of oil exported rose from \$53.29 in January to \$70.78 in June, far exceeding the projected price of \$45 in the 2021 budget. Though the average number of barrels exported per day was lower than projected (2.94 million versus 3.25 million), average daily revenues rose from \$152.87 million in January to \$204.70 million in June, for an overall daily average of \$183.15 million compared to the projected \$146.25 million. The average daily revenue surplus rose from \$6.60 million in January to \$204.70 million in June,

Figure 5.

Actual vs. Projected Daily Oil Revenue, Monthly Average, January–June 2021, in \$ Millions

culminating in an average daily oil revenue surplus of \$36.70 million for the first 6 months of 2021, or an estimated \$6.64 billion during the 6-month period.³⁸³

Iraq's Minister of Oil, Ihsan Abdul Jabbar Ismail, said in early May that he does not expect that oil prices will drop below \$65 per barrel, according to a media report. He went on to state that OPEC intended to ease the production cuts that have limited Iraq oil exports in 2021.³⁸⁴

According to media reports, as of mid-June, Iraq's central government had not begun sending the KRG its share of the budget as agreed to in the 2021 Budget Law approved on March 31. The ongoing dispute also involves the failure of the KRG to turn over 250,000 barrels of oil per day to Iraq's state oil marketer for export, as required under the budget law.³⁸⁵ Although not confirmed by the end of the quarter, one mid-June media report said that an agreement had been reached to begin sending a portion of the budget to the KRG including payments in arrears accumulated since January 1.³⁸⁶ Since the end of the quarter, there have been multiple media reports that Iraq's Ministry of Finance transferred \$138 million to the KRG on July 11. It is not known if this was the beginning of regular payments from the central government to the KRG.³⁸⁷

Violence and Boycotts Threaten October National Elections

Iran-aligned militia groups continued to intimidate nationalist political groups to try to stop them from challenging pro-Iran political groups in upcoming elections. The DoS said that these groups have been involved in the many assassinations of political activists aligned with the protest movement.³⁸⁸

On May 9, activist and anticorruption campaigner Ehab Jawad al-Wazni was murdered by unknown assailants, sparking protests in Karbala in which demonstrators demanded accountability and justice.³⁸⁹ The demonstrations spread north, peaking with a large protest scene across Baghdad on May 25, where two protestors were killed and a number were injured.³⁹⁰ Those injured included members of the ISF.³⁹¹ Iraqi government authorities have not been able to identify or arrest the perpetrators.³⁹²

The DoS said the government needs to convince Iraqi activists that those who commit violence will be held to account; however, repeated statements by the Prime Minister that the government is investigating the violence no longer convince activists and Iraqis have derided the statements on social media.³⁹³

Jeanine Hennis-Plasschaert, the Special Representative of the Secretary General and Head of the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI), in remarks before the UN Security Council on May 11, said that security forces perpetrated violence and persecution against protestors with “rampant impunity.”³⁹⁴ The DoS reported that it met regularly during the quarter with Iraqi government leadership to emphasize support for Iraqi efforts to uphold the rule of law, while reminding interlocutors that the world is watching to see whether the Iraqi government can hold accountable those who have attacked Iraqis exercising their rights to freedom of expression and peaceful assembly.³⁹⁵

In response to the violence and overall instability, 21 political parties associated with the antigovernment protest movement (known as the Tishreen movement) stated that they will withdraw from the October elections.³⁹⁶ Media reporting predicted the parties would not fare well in the national elections, so their withdrawal is likely to have a limited effect on the election results, though additional withdrawals could undermine public perception about the legitimacy of the vote.³⁹⁷ The DoS said many other protest movement parties and activists continue to urge everyone to participate in the elections.³⁹⁸

Despite Violence and Boycotts, Election Preparations Continue

Despite the protests and threat of boycotts, the Iraqi government continued to prepare for the upcoming parliamentary elections. On April 12, Iraq President Barham Salih signed a decree confirming the October 10 election date and acknowledged the decision taken by the Iraqi Parliament to dissolve itself by October 7, which is required before early elections can be held. He also called on all state institutions to fulfill the necessary requirements for conducting the elections. The DoS reported that preparations for elections continued and assessed that the vote would take place as scheduled, despite some legal challenges to the electoral law.³⁹⁹

In support of the October elections, the UN Security Council unanimously approved a new mandate for UNAMI on May 27.⁴⁰⁰ According to the DoS, the renewed mandate contained specific actions to be taken in support of election monitoring, including a robust and visible UN monitoring team, coordination of UN monitoring with any international and regional observers invited by Iraq, a strategic messaging campaign for Iraqi voters, and production of a summary report from the UN Secretary-General no later than 30 days after the election. The DoS said the European Union was exploring the possibility of its own election observation mission, but the details of any such mission were not available.⁴⁰¹

In support of the October elections, the UN Security Council unanimously approved a new mandate for UNAMI on May 27.

The United States has contributed \$9.7 million to UNAMI’s technical elections assistance program, the largest project of its type in the world. As the lead nation on Iraqi affairs in the UN Security Council, the United States also worked with fellow council members to achieve a positive UN response to the Iraqi government’s requests in November and February for UN-led elections monitoring.⁴⁰²

USAID continued to provide election support despite the recent violence. (See Table 4.) This included U.S. support to the Independent High Electoral Commission (IHEC) through both of USAID’s support mechanisms—the Iraq Provincial Elections Activity project implemented through the Consortium for Electoral and Political Processes Support and the UNAMI Election Support Program.⁴⁰³ However, IHEC commissioners have demonstrated a reluctance to be public facing in their roles. Technical support has continued largely unimpeded, though some events have taken place in Erbil instead of Baghdad for security purposes.⁴⁰⁴ USAID’s civil society partners also continued planning efforts to roll out civic and voter education activities throughout the country.⁴⁰⁵ USAID stated that as those activities will unfold over the coming months, it will monitor any violence and instability for effects on implementers and their activities.⁴⁰⁶

USAID reported that its election support activities remain under a branding waiver. The project management team is taking additional steps to minimize external visibility of the U.S. assistance that could be construed as either compromising Iraqi sovereignty or directly combating disinformation efforts undertaken by malign actors.⁴⁰⁷ A branding waiver exempts implementers from having labels on their products in instances where doing so may present a risk.

Table 4.

USAID-funded Elections Support Activities in Iraq

Project Name/Duration/Budget	
<p><i>Iraq Provincial Elections Activity</i> September 2018–December 2023 \$25.4 million</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Builds on the assistance provided to Iraq’s IHEC and civil society organizations to improve the management and administration of Iraq’s election systems and processes. • Provides civil society organizations with funding and training to conduct activities aimed at encouraging citizens to register to vote in the period leading up to the provincial elections and to vote on Election Day. • Will continue supporting IHEC and Iraqi civil society after Election Day to ensure that democratic gains are consolidated and that Iraqi stakeholders are better prepared to administer future elections.
<p><i>UNAMI Elections Support Program</i> February 2021–February 2023 \$9.7 million</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provides additional assistance to the IHEC and will contribute to the recruitment and deployment of seven electoral experts and two information technology advisors to provide assistance on electoral preparations at the national and provincial levels. • Builds the capacity of the Governorate Electoral Offices of the IHEC, including advising and supporting electoral planning and coordination efforts and the preparation and management of a Results Management System. • Funding will also develop a code of conduct for political advisors participating in the electoral process.

Source: USAID ME Bureau, response to USAID OIG request for information, 3/26/2021.

Iraqi Government Steps Up Anticorruption Efforts

Iraq's Commission of Integrity (COI) and Anti-Corruption Commission have been working in tandem to investigate public officials accused of corruption.⁴⁰⁸ On April 21, the COI issued 8 arrest warrants and 50 summons for former government officials, including a member of parliament, a minister, and a ministry undersecretary, according to a media report.⁴⁰⁹

On June 8, the COI arrested former officials on charges of corruption, abuse of executive authority, and misuse of public funds. Those arrested included the former Babil governor, two former bank directors, a former presidential advisor, a former Kirkuk provincial council chairman and a former council member, the president of the Northern Technical University in Ninewa, the director of the Distribution Section of the Petroleum Products Distribution company, and the director-general of the Provincial Investment Authority in Dhi Qar province.⁴¹⁰

In a paper released in late April, a member of the Iraq Britain Business Council described the effects of widespread corruption in Iraq. According to research cited in the paper, at least 22 percent of Iraqis pay a bribe annually, petty corruption is widespread, and jobs and opportunities are lost because of work not performed and investments not made because of corruption. The paper also said that corruption in Iraq extends from the top to the bottom of official Iraq. Since 2003, Ministers of Defense, Trade, Electricity, Oil, and Interior have been investigated for corruption, and several have fled the country with hundreds of millions of dollars.⁴¹¹

In late May, the UN Development Program Iraq, partnering with the European Union Mission in Iraq, announced a 4-year, \$18 million initiative to fight corruption and improve transparency in Iraq's private sector. The initiative will cover all of Iraq, including the Iraqi Kurdistan Region.⁴¹² It will require coordination between dozens of government agencies, which could be a major challenge, according to a media report.⁴¹³

Electricity Blackouts in Basrah

The DoS reported that Iraq continued to suffer from shortages of electricity and water during the quarter. Public dissatisfaction with these issues typically increases during the hot summer months.⁴¹⁴ According to media reports, on June 28, Electricity Minister Majid Mahdi Hantush resigned following public and political pressure over repeated power outages throughout Iraq. At the time, temperatures in Iraq's southern provinces averaged 122 degrees Fahrenheit, and power blackouts were frequent, resulting in a curtailment of working hours because of the extreme heat. As of the end of the quarter, Basrah province, where protests have taken place during past summers because of electricity blackouts, was preparing for power-related demonstrations unless power was restored.⁴¹⁵

At the end of the quarter, electricity towers and lines came under attack—possibly by ISIS, according to media reports—resulting in blackouts throughout Iraq. The prime minister's office issued a statement on June 28 suggesting that parties in addition to ISIS may be responsible for the attacks in an effort to undercut the government's efforts to increase electricity to Iraq's during the hot summer months, according to a media report. The attacks disabled power lines in Ninewa, Kirkuk, Diyala, and Babil provinces, just as temperatures were reaching the highest levels of the year in the central and southern provinces. Blackouts in those areas lasted as long as 20 hours per day. Blackouts have also been caused by the inability of the electricity grid to

support demand.⁴¹⁶ In response, Prime Minister al-Kadhimi announced the formation of a committee to support the Ministry of Electricity in order to “strongly confront all kinds of interference with power systems.”⁴¹⁷

The DoS reported that the U.S. Government has extensively engaged with the Iraqi government to encourage restoration of funds for electricity projects that were omitted in the final 2021 budget, including funds for the Iraq-Jordan electric grid interconnection project. The United States is also taking an active role facilitating engagements between Baghdad and the Gulf Cooperation Council Interconnection Authority to establish a grid interconnection with Iraq’s Gulf neighbors.⁴¹⁸ The DoS reported in early June that the Minister of Electricity had held discussions with the authority regarding a proposal for an Iraq-GCC power grid connection, but that the ministry had not heard whether the GCC believed the proposal was feasible.⁴¹⁹

Turkey and PKK-Related Violence Increases in the Iraqi Kurdistan Region

PKK PRESENCE OUTSIDE IRAQI KURDISTAN REGION PROMPTS TURKISH STRIKES

On June 2, the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) told DoS PRM staff that while there were large numbers of refugees in Makhmur camp located south of Mosul in Ninewa province, the possible presence of “persons with a non-civilian character” (referring to members of the Kurdistan Workers’ Party, or PKK) makes it difficult for UNHCR to access the camp.⁴²⁰ According to a pro-Turkey press report citing ISF and local officials, the presence of the PKK in Makhmur camp prevents the ISF from accessing the camp.⁴²¹



USAID, Sinjar Electricity Department, and Nadia’s Initiative deliver power line transformers to Sinjar City and 5 villages in southern Sinjar. (USAID photo)

On June 5, Turkey launched a UAV strike on the edge of the camp, killing three people. Turkey claimed it killed a PKK senior leader in the attack.⁴²² On June 11, Turkey killed another alleged senior PKK leader just outside the camp in a second UAV strike. According to the DoS, the camp has no defined boundary, making it difficult to determine whether Turkish airstrikes there are targeting inside the camp or just outside.⁴²³

The DoS said that it is concerned about increased tensions between the ISF and the various armed groups present in Sinjar district, including the PKK. The KRG has accused the People's Protection Units (YPG), of smuggling fighters to Sinjar and has urged the United States to address the issue with SDF Commander Mazloun Abdi. The DoS encouraged the Iraqi government and KRG to work toward fully implementing the October 2020 Sinjar Agreement, which the DoS believes is the best way to ensure the future stability, security, and economic health of Sinjar. KRG forces are not allowed in Sinjar without central government approval, limiting their ability to implement the agreement. The DoS said Sinjar needs a local security force, and its membership should be representative of the community it protects, as outlined in the agreement. Turkish President Erdogan has made public statements threatening to “remedy” the situation in Sinjar and Makhmur if the Iraqi government is unable to do so.⁴²⁴

On April 23, Turkey launched Operations Thunderbolt Claw and Lightning Claw, part of its annual spring operations against the PKK forces in Iraq.

PKK AND IRAN-ALIGNED MILITIAS COOPERATE

The DoS referred to publicly available reporting from March citing cooperation between the PKK, local affiliates, and some Iran-aligned militia units in the Sinjar district. Iran-aligned units provided political cover for continued PKK presence in Sinjar in violation of the October 2020 Sinjar Agreement. The presence of several Turkish military bases in the Iraqi Kurdistan Region and a visit by Turkey's defense minister to the military bases without going through normal diplomatic procedures have aggravated the situation. The Turkish base at Bashiqa (just inside the Kurdish region) one of the most visible political-military issue between Iraq and Turkey. Bashiqa was hit by rockets on April 14, presumably fired by Iran-aligned militias sending a warning. The Iraqi government claims the Turkish presence violates its sovereignty, while Turkey claims it received Iraqi government permission in the wake of the ISIS offensive to take Mosul.⁴²⁵

TURKEY'S SPRING CAMPAIGN AGAINST PKK

On April 23, Turkey launched Operations Thunderbolt Claw and Lightning Claw, part of its annual spring operations against the PKK forces in Iraq. According to the DoS, the latest operations focused on areas northeast of Dohuk, with airstrikes and commando raids. Targets included areas in the Qandil mountains, the suspected headquarters of PKK senior leadership.⁴²⁶

In the past, Turkey confined its counter-PKK operations to the largely unpopulated mountainous terrain along the Iraqi border in extreme northern Turkey, as well as airstrikes against the PKK stronghold in Qandil. However, Turkey's operations in June expanded further south in Duhok province, forcing local residents to flee dozens of villages and pushing the PKK into clashes with Peshmerga. Additional Turkish airstrikes against PKK targets in Sinjar District have also forced some Iraqis to flee the area in recent years.⁴²⁷



Rubble and debris are removed from demolished homes in neighborhoods in Mosul. (USAID photo)

STABILIZATION

Since the territorial defeat of ISIS in 2017, the U.S. Government has sought to accelerate restoration of essential services in liberated areas of Iraq that suffered devastation during ISIS occupation and the struggle to defeat it. In addition, the DoS said, the United States assists ethnic and religious minority communities and supports programs that help IDPs return safely and voluntarily to their homes of origin or settle in other destinations of their choosing. The U.S. Government seeks to establish stability in Iraq so that the Iraqi government can suppress future insurgencies and violent extremist organizations at the local government and law enforcement level.⁴²⁸ (See Table 5.)

Table 5.

DoS and USAID-funded Stabilization Activities in Iraq

Project Name/Duration/Budget	
<p>Funding Facility for Stabilization (FFS) and the Iraq Crisis Response and Resiliency Program (ICRRP) July 2015–December 2023 \$500 million</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • FFS: Restores essential services damaged or destroyed by ISIS to create the conditions for IDPs to return home. In 2020, USAID redirected funding through the FFS to support the COVID-19 response. • ICRRP: USAID-approved activities to respond to the water crisis in Basrah in 2019, which allocated \$5 million to rehabilitate seven water treatment plants.
<p>Shared Future June 2018–September 2023 \$17.8 million</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Promotes the durable return for IDPs from the Ninewa Plain. • Works with youth, community, and religious leaders to increase mutual understanding, tolerance, and trust; improve vocational and leadership skills; and improve youth livelihood opportunities through targeted vocational training aimed at sustainable income generation.

Project Name/Duration/Budget	
<p><i>Iraq Community Resilience Initiative</i> Duration: June 2018–February 2022 \$92.2 million</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Seeks to improve conditions that allow for durable returns in areas liberated from ISIS, and to mitigate discrete, emergent challenges that threaten overall stability. • Increases stability through quick impact activities and strategic interventions in the Ninewa Plain, Mosul, Sinjar, and western Anbar.
<p><i>Safe Return</i> August 2018–September 2021 \$7.2 million</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Aims to reintegrate IDPs from minority communities in the Ninewa Plain and Sinjar who are survivors of severe human-rights abuses. • Established three Safe Return Centers in Bashiqaq, al-Hamdaniyah (Qaraqosh), and Sinjar districts through local Iraqi partners. Safe Return Centers provide survivors with comprehensive medical, mental health, and psychosocial services, as well as assistance with livelihood recovery and legal support. USAID funding also supports the Smile of Hope torture treatment center in Mosul.
<p><i>Supporting the Return of Displaced Populations in Ninewa Plain and Western Ninewa</i> September 2018–September 2022 \$27.5 million</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Supports the reintegration of displaced populations of ethnic and religious minorities from Ninewa Plain and western Ninewa province through comprehensive packages of livelihood, community peacebuilding, education, and psychosocial activities. • Supports the rehabilitation of destroyed or damaged homes for displaced persons in Hamdaniyah, Tal Kayf, and Bashiqaq districts in the Ninewa Plain and provides support for small- to medium-sized enterprises in Bashiqaq, al-Hamdaniyah (Qaraqosh), and Sinjar districts. • Additional focus on creating long-term job opportunities through individual livelihood support, vocational training, job placement, internships, and business support packages.
<p><i>Building Community Resilience in Ninewa Post-ISIS</i> October 2018–September 2021 \$5 million</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Enables the safe, voluntary, and sustained return for internally displaced communities from Ninewa Plain and western Ninewa province by addressing identified drivers of social and political discord and barriers to return in the communities of Bartella, Tal Afar, and Sinjar. • Seeks to forge intercommunal agreements and promote community reconciliation and resilience through research, identification of key stakeholders and ideological positions, and intra- and inter-community dialogues.
<p><i>Durable Communities and Economic Opportunities</i> September 2019–September 2024 \$125 million</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Seeks to build resilient, adaptive communities to advance economic wellbeing in target communities in Iraq. • Addresses underlying drivers of conflict, increases community leadership of inclusive local development, improves private sector networks, and increases micro-, small-, and medium-sized enterprise development.
<p><i>Transitional Assistance to Internally Displaced Populations in Erbil, Iraq</i> October 2019–March 2022 \$6.8 million</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provides cash assistance to support IDPs from Ninewa province in protracted displacement in Erbil and provides IDPs with targeted information and planning sessions to assist in the preparation for durable solutions for their families. • Additional focus on building the organizational capacity of local Iraqi organizations implementing program activities under the project.
<p><i>Strengthening the Ankawa Humanitarian Committee to Respond</i> October 2020–September 2022 \$2.5 million</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Builds the capacity of the AHC while responding to the needs of IDPs in Iraq through institutional capacity-building and organizational development. • Implemented in partnership with the Transitional Assistance to Internally Displaced Populations in Erbil, Iraq activity.

Source: USAID ME Bureau, response to USAID OIG request for information, 12/11/2020; DoS, response to DoS OIG request for information, 3/24/2021.

Since 2014, ISIS violence in northern Iraq has caused more than 6 million Iraqis to flee from their homes to IDP camps and other locations across the country.

U.S. Government Provides Assistance for Ibn al-Khatib Hospital Rehabilitation

On April 24, a fire killed more than 80 people and injured 110 others at Ibn al-Khatib Hospital in Baghdad, which was designated for COVID-19 patients.⁴²⁹ An Iraqi official said that the fire was caused by exploding oxygen cylinders. Casualties were exacerbated due to overcrowding in the building's corridors, flammable building materials, inadequate oxygen storage procedures, and lack of sprinkler system or fire hoses.⁴³⁰ Iraq's health minister resigned following the hospital fire, and the Iraqi government ordered a nationwide review of health and safety procedures at hospitals, citing negligence and corruption as major factors contributing to the high numbers of casualties.⁴³¹

On May 4, the U.S. Embassy in Baghdad announced plans to support hospital reopening efforts and to create a memorial for the victims of the fire through a USAID grant to the Iraq chapter of the American Medical Services Association.⁴³² The funding will support the replacement of medical and nonmedical equipment that was destroyed in the fire, including hospital beds, patient monitors, and personal protective equipment needed to treat COVID-19 patients.⁴³³ In addition, USAID will work with the Baghdad Civil Defense to install a new fire safety system that would likely include smoke detectors, fire extinguishing supplies, fire exit ladders, and emergency signage.⁴³⁴

USAID reported that during the quarter, all in-kind assistance, including patient beds, waiting area chairs, refrigerators, air conditioning units, and other equipment, was delivered and installed; arrangements were also made to purchase specialized medical equipment.⁴³⁵ In addition, fire resistant material was installed to replace secondary ceilings, all doors and windows were replaced, the painting of hallways, patient rooms, and floor facilities were completed, and fire safety exits and illuminating signs were fully installed and tested.⁴³⁶ USAID reported that other refurbishment efforts were ongoing, including floor cleaning and repairs and the installation of the fire safety system, which began on June 7 and had a target completion date of July 9.⁴³⁷

USAID Approves New Award to Preserve Cultural Heritage and Religious Freedom in Iraq

Since 2014, ISIS violence in northern Iraq has caused more than 6 million Iraqis to flee from their homes to IDP camps and other locations across the country.⁴³⁸ At the same time, ISIS was responsible for the systematic genocide against religious and ethnic minority groups, including slavery, conscription of child soldiers, and sexual violence.⁴³⁹ During the quarter, USAID supported the return and reintegration of displaced Iraqis through programs that provide tools and resources to help individuals and communities recover from crisis, including the provision of support to survivors of atrocities committed by ISIS.⁴⁴⁰

On May 10, USAID approved a \$1 million award to the Antiquities Coalition for the preservation of cultural heritage and religious freedom in Iraq.⁴⁴¹ The award will assist three entities—the Catholic Diocese of Mosul Archbishop Mikhael Moussa's Centre Numérique des Manuscrits Orientaux, the Syriac Museum, and Yazda—in Iraq and strengthen their

IRAQ: U.S. ASSISTANCE SNAPSHOT

April 1, 2021–June 30, 2021

DROUGHT CONCERNS

Drought conditions have been persistent since the beginning of 2021. The watershed area for the Tigris and Euphrates Rivers in Iraq is experiencing the second driest season in 40 years. During the quarter, lower rainfall and reduced water levels from upstream dams potentially affected agriculture, livestock, and food security. USAID reported that its humanitarian partners are monitoring the potential humanitarian impacts and assessing the need for intervention.

KIRKUK

Water shortages in Kirkuk province, particularly along the Lesser Zab River in Dibis and al-Hawiga districts, could affect wheat and barley production. Low agricultural production from the water shortages could impact both livelihoods and food security for residents of these districts, which include a large population of returnees.

DIYALA

The surface area of Lake Harmin, Diyala province's main source of water, has shrunk by half, affecting irrigation and agricultural production. IDPs who want to return to Diyala have cited the dried-out irrigation channel from the Diyala River as an obstacle to return. The Iraqi government restricted farmers from planting summer crops due to the diminishing water levels, which affects income and food security.



SALAH AD DIN

Damaged water infrastructure in Salah ad Din province continues to hamper the return and reintegration of IDPs. Water treatment plants in many return areas are destroyed and access to drinking water remains irregular. Humanitarian relief organizations are monitoring the impact the drought may have on IDPs, especially those in the province's 82 informal IDP sites.

NINEWA

Ninewa province is usually the largest cereal producer in the country, with its wheat and barley fields mostly fed with rainwater. When rainfed winter cereals failed in 2021, many farmers ploughed their crops or leased their land for livestock to graze. Forecasts of 2021 production of wheat will likely be 70 percent less than 2020 levels and barley production will be negligible, according to the local Department of Agriculture.

4.1 million

People in Need of Humanitarian Assistance

UN–February 2021

2.4 million

People in Acute Need

UN–March 2021

1.2 million

Internally Displaced Persons

IOM–April 2021

246,000

Syrian Refugees Sheltering in Iraq

UNHCR–June 2021

4.9 million

IDP Returns Since 2014

IOM–April 2021

COVID-19 VACCINE ROLL-OUT

More than **1 million** COVID vaccine doses have been delivered to Iraq, enough to cover **2.7 percent** of the population

Allocated (COVAX)
16 million

Doses Delivered

550,000
China–Sinopharm

Approximately
1,000,000
COVAX–AstraZeneca/SII



According to the United Nations, 1.7 million people in Iraq need acute humanitarian assistance.

capacity to preserve and protect Iraq’s religious and ethnic communities’ unique identities and cultural heritage materials.⁴⁴²

USAID said that its faith-based approach is rooted in a mandate from President Biden’s Executive Order establishing the White House Office of Faith-Based and Neighborhood Partnerships.⁴⁴³ The mandate reaffirms the U.S. Government’s longstanding commitment to strengthen partnerships with faith-based community organizations, and recognizes the partnerships are “vital for the success and effectiveness of the United States’ diplomatic, international development, and humanitarian work around the world.”⁴⁴⁴

HUMANITARIAN ASSISTANCE

According to the United Nations, 1.7 million people in Iraq need acute humanitarian assistance.⁴⁴⁵ According to the International Organization for Migration (IOM), there are almost 1.2 million internally displaced persons (IDP) dispersed across 18 provinces in Iraq.⁴⁴⁶

Iraq Facilitates Repatriations of Families from al-Hol

On May 25, the Iraqi Ministry of Displacement and Migration safely repatriated 93 Iraqi families (381 individuals) from the al-Hol camp in northeast Syria to Iraq. The voluntarily repatriated families were taken to the Jed’dah 1 IDP camp in Ninewa province near Mosul, which is administered by the IOM under the auspices of the ministry.⁴⁴⁷

The 381 returnees, including 233 children, were from a group of approximately 6,800 Iraqis who were living in al-Hol prior to the fall of Baghuz in 2019. The DoS said that this population is thought to have fled from ISIS attacks inside Iraq, and is unlikely to have ties to ISIS. UNHCR considers the “pre-Baghuz” population to be asylum-seekers. The United States and other interlocutors urged the Iraqi government to start repatriations with this subset of the Iraqi population in al-Hol, as they would likely face less stigma back in Iraq, potentially easing their reintegration into their original communities.⁴⁴⁸

This was the first group from a total of 500 families the Iraqi government has committed to repatriate from al-Hol, and the first formal return since September 2018. According to the DoS, the returning families were happy to return to Iraq, citing an oppressive environment in al-Hol where active ISIS elements threatened camp residents with murder and disappearance.⁴⁴⁹ The DoS reported that the next 100 families are expected to depart al-Hol in late June.⁴⁵⁰ During the quarter, USAID implementers provided household items to the refugees arriving to Jed’dah 1 along with services aimed at protecting and supporting this vulnerable population.⁴⁵¹

During the quarter, UN humanitarian relief organizations asked the Iraqi government to counter the negative press surrounding the repatriation.⁴⁵² USAID and the DoS reported that the UN was concerned about the Iraqi government’s framing of assistance provided to al-Hol returnees as “rehabilitation,” such as a sign at the entrance to the camp reading “Jed’dah 1 Center for Health and Rehabilitation,” which the UN said incorrectly assumed the returnees were radicalized and needed to be “rehabilitated.”⁴⁵³

U.S. Assistance Seeks to Address Ongoing Displacement Challenges

During the quarter, the humanitarian assistance community continued to respond to the changing needs of IDPs in Iraq. One ongoing challenge is the Iraqi government's efforts to close IDP camps in the country since mid-October 2020. The closures occurred without advance notice to or prior coordination with the humanitarian community and affected at least 45,000 individuals.⁴⁵⁴ As of the end of the quarter, 27 formal IDP camps in Iraq remained open; two camps in federal Iraq and 25 camps in the Iraqi Kurdistan Region. USAID reported no further developments during the quarter regarding IDP camp closures and that it remains concerned about secondarily displaced IDPs from past camp closures.⁴⁵⁵

USAID reported that IDPs in some camps faced discontinuation of services due to budget constraints of the Ministry of Displacement and Migration, whose 2021 budget was cut by nearly 70 percent compared to 2020. On April 21, the Ministry announced it would cease provision of assistance to all IDP camps starting in July due to budget constraints.⁴⁵⁶

The DoS reported that approximately 30 percent of those affected by the camp closures did not return to their areas of origin and instead became further displaced. Of those who did return to their home village or neighborhood, 30 percent were not able to secure safe housing and are now living in highly vulnerable situations.⁴⁵⁷ Many IDPs were unable to return to their areas of origin due to insecurity and the absence of basic services.⁴⁵⁸ A study released in April found that IDPs cited security concerns, such as sporadic violent clashes and fear of armed actors, as a primary barrier to return. The study also drew attention to other barriers to return such as damaged homes, lack of basic services, and limited livelihood opportunities.⁴⁵⁹

USAID reported that on June 4, a large fire in Dahuk province's Shariya IDP camp displaced more than 130 households and injured more than 30 people. The majority of the impacted households were temporarily relocated to either communal facilities in the camp or to temporary shelters near the Khanke IDP camp. USAID reported that relief agencies coordinated with the Iraqi government to provide essential resources to these affected households. The Iraqi Ministries of Interior and of Displacement and Migration communicated a plan to change the shelter system across Dahuk from tents to brick or concrete shelters with basic services.⁴⁶⁰

During the quarter, U.S. Government partner organizations continued to modify their programs to transition from in-camp settings to areas of return or areas where IDPs have moved. The UN's Camp Coordination and Camp Management Cluster, UNHCR, and the IOM were working on a proposal for humanitarian response in informal settlements with large numbers of IDPs. Many U.S. Government partners continued to provide services to IDPs living in informal settlements near the recently closed camps.⁴⁶¹ USAID provided a current partner with \$5.5 million in additional funding to provide multi-purpose cash assistance to the most vulnerable people residing in areas of high displacement.⁴⁶²

According to DoS PRM, IOM continued to develop its multifaceted, comprehensive program through Phase IX of the Community Revitalization Project to support facilitated, voluntary, and dignified returns of IDPs from camps to their areas of origin. Most identified areas of

As of the end of the quarter, 27 formal IDP camps in Iraq remained open; two camps in federal Iraq and 25 camps in the Iraqi Kurdistan Region.

origin are in Ninewa and Anbar provinces; others include Basrah, Baghdad, Erbil, Kirkuk, and Salah ad Din provinces. Projects under the program work to improve community access to essential services including electricity, water and irrigation, health services, and education. During the quarter, the chief concern among IDPs, refugees, and returnees was their inability to find economic opportunities to support their families. Most individuals affected by displacement were living on daily wages.⁴⁶³

USAID Implementers Face New Access Challenges

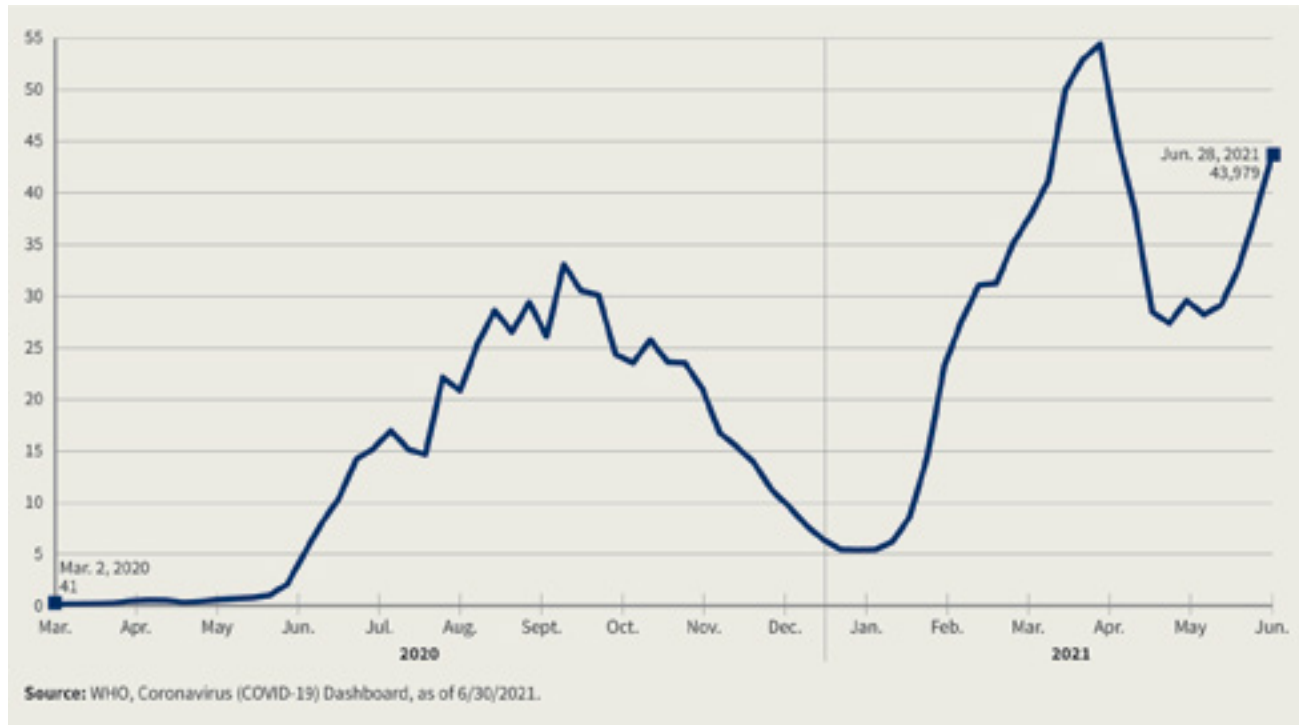
Authorized NGOs that conduct humanitarian activities in Iraq rely on “access letters” to move freely between provinces.⁴⁶⁴ Last quarter, USAID reported that the Iraqi government’s recent launch of an online access letter program resulted in modest improvements in the humanitarian operating environment in Iraq.⁴⁶⁵

During the quarter, however, USAID implementers faced new challenges in accessing recipients and humanitarian assistance locations.⁴⁶⁶ USAID reported that the Iraqi Government’s Directorate of NGOs (DNGO) instituted new reporting requirements for NGOs in May, including monthly activity reporting and the provision of contracts between NGOs and donors to the government directorate. Some NGOs did not comply, resulting in the denial of access letters. USAID reported that these bureaucratic measures introduced unnecessary hurdles for NGOs seeking to acquire authorization to work in federal Iraq. The access issue improved after engagement by the UN Humanitarian Coordinator resulted in the DNGO Director agreeing to process pending NGO access letter requests, which demonstrated goodwill by the director. However, relief actors remain concerned about requirements outlined in the 2010 Government of Iraq Law on NGOs.⁴⁶⁷



Parcels of non-food items are distributed to families across Baghdad, Ninewa, Anbar, Salah ad Din, and Diyala provinces. In addition, COVID-19 test kits were distributed. (USAID photo)

Figure 6.

Total Weekly Confirmed COVID Cases in Iraq, March 2020–June 2021, in Thousands**COVID-19 Infections Remain High with Limited Vaccine Distribution**

COVID-19 cases in Iraq decreased compared to the previous quarter, a decline that coincided with Ramadan.⁴⁶⁸ (See Figure 6.) The World Health Organization (WHO) reported that the potential risk of the highly contagious Delta variant could worsen the outbreak amid ongoing vaccination efforts.⁴⁶⁹ Iraq still has the second highest cumulative number of deaths in the region.⁴⁷⁰ During the quarter, Iraq began building new diagnostic laboratories with the capacity to test for COVID-19 variants.⁴⁷¹

The Iraq’s Ministry of Health reported that by late June at least 976,052 vaccines had been administered, with an average of 15,000 people vaccinated per day.⁴⁷² USAID reported that the number of vaccinated IDPs is not available.⁴⁷³ Despite limited vaccine supplies globally, Ministry of Health officials announced that vaccine deliveries would increase “tenfold” in July.⁴⁷⁴

The Iraqi government had already received vaccines from Sinopharm, COVAX, and Pfizer and had secured at least 30 million vaccine doses through bilateral donations, purchase agreements, and the COVAX facility. These vaccines will cover 60 percent of the eligible population.⁴⁷⁵ In late May, the Emirates Red Crescent announced that with support from the UAE Department of Health and in coordination with UNHCR, it would donate 15,000 doses

The DoS reported that ISIS continued to exploit the COVID-19 pandemic through messaging to their adherents and to gain new recruits, while taking advantage of potential distraction of Coalition members.

of the the Sinopharm vaccine to the KRG Ministry of Health's COVID-19 vaccination program targeting IDPs and Syrian refugees in the Iraqi Kurdistan Region. The effort will target the most urgent cases including the elderly and those suffering from chronic illness and be implemented mostly in Erbil province.⁴⁷⁶

The DoS reported that COVID-19 precautions resulted in restricted access to camps, lack of livelihood opportunities, increased prices on basic food items, increased risk of eviction due to socioeconomic impact, increased domestic violence, and interrupted education activities.⁴⁷⁷ During Ramadan, Iraq adopted a partial curfew and experienced a decrease in COVID-19 cases, but cases rebounded to pre-Ramadan levels by late May due to COVID-19 variants, low vaccine uptake, and lack of commitment to social distancing, according to a WHO official.⁴⁷⁸

Vaccine acceptance among Iraqis varies; according to media reports, Iraqis are most inclined to accept the Pfizer vaccine, followed by the AstraZeneca vaccine.⁴⁷⁹ A Ministry of Health official also indicated that the ministry was continuing to diversify the vaccine supply to "satisfy all Iraqis," citing skepticism of a Western pharmaceutical manufacturer.⁴⁸⁰ The Ministry of Health amplified publicity of a political leader receiving the vaccine to encourage acceptance.⁴⁸¹ The DoS reported that ISIS continued to exploit the COVID-19 pandemic through messaging to their adherents and to gain new recruits, while taking advantage of potential distraction of Coalition members.⁴⁸²

USAID reported that COVID-19 continued to affect program implementation during the quarter, with COVID-19 restrictions on in-person engagements limiting project engagements; instead, implementers conducted training virtually.⁴⁸³ Some implementers continued in-person activities through small groups and door-to-door assistance, but without the ability to gather large groups of people some implementers did not reach their target numbers of beneficiaries.⁴⁸⁴ BHA implementers continued COVID-19 risk communication and community engagement during the quarter, which included fact-based messaging about the COVID-19 vaccines available in Iraq and addressing misinformation and vaccine hesitancy.⁴⁸⁵ USAID also supported COVID-19 screening; distribution of infection prevention and control kits in IDP camps; and healthcare worker training on case management, infection prevention and control, and vaccination.⁴⁸⁶







U.S. Army Soldiers evaluate local conditions in a Syrian village. (U.S. Army photo)

SYRIA

66 Security

77 Stabilization

81 Humanitarian Assistance

SYRIA

During the quarter, the U.S. Government prioritized the following strategic objectives in Syria: the preservation of a nationwide ceasefire, the provision of life-saving humanitarian aid to Syrian civilians in need, and the enduring defeat of ISIS and al-Qaeda and their affiliates in Syria in order to further the conditions for a political resolution to the Syrian conflict as outlined in United Nations Security Council Resolution (UNSCR) 2254. The United States also worked to counter the destabilizing activities of Iran and its supporters and proxies that threaten U.S. forces in Syria.⁴⁸⁷

SECURITY

Combined Joint Task Force–Operation Inherent Resolve (CJTF-OIR) continued to train, advise, and support partner forces in Syria during the quarter, with U.S. forces operating from bases in northeastern Syria and the Tanf Garrison, a desert outpost further south near the borders with Iraq and Jordan.⁴⁸⁸ CJTF-OIR reported that there has been no significant changes to the “force laydown or function” of these forces.⁴⁸⁹ In addition to tailored transfers of resources and materiel, CJTF-OIR supported partner forces with joint strike and intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance capabilities, USCENTCOM said.⁴⁹⁰

Coalition forces operated with SDF forces in the Eastern Syria Security Area (ESSA)—which includes parts of Hasakah and Dayr az Zawr governorates east of the Euphrates River—and with the Mughawir al-Thawra (MaT) forces at Tanf.⁴⁹¹ USCENTCOM reported that pro-regime forces maintained positions near the Coalition operating environment at the Tanf Garrison.⁴⁹²

CJTF-OIR said that malign actors continued during the quarter to conduct harassing attacks on Coalition and partner force positions.⁴⁹³ CJTF-OIR reported previously that these malign actors include ISIS, pro-Syrian regime forces, and Iranian-aligned militia forces, and that these attacks are aimed at exploiting local grievances to turn locals against Coalition forces.⁴⁹⁴



SELECTED KEY EVENTS, APRIL 1, 2021–JUNE 30, 2021

APRIL 3

The SDF completes a security sweep at the al-Hol camp, arresting 125 suspected ISIS operatives following multiple killings at the camp.

MAY 12

The SDF, with Coalition assistance, completes a 4-day operation against ISIS in eastern Dayr az Zawr province near the Iraqi border, demolishing ISIS hideouts, tunnels, and smuggling routes.

MAY 23

USCENTCOM Commander General Kenneth F. McKenzie, Jr., meets with SDF commander Mazlum Abdi during a visit to Syria.

APR

APRIL 10

The SDF detains 13 individuals at the al-Hol camp suspected of smuggling people out of the camp.

MAY 17

Russian jets conduct dozens of airstrikes against ISIS targets in the Syrian desert, part of a series of intensifying counter-ISIS operations.

MAY

MAY 26

Syria holds a presidential election. The international community condemns the election as neither free nor fair.

Syrian Democratic Forces at a training and operations facility.
(U.S. Army photo)



JUNE 5-9

SDF forces, with Coalition assistance, raid multiple ISIS locations in the ESSA, capturing ISIS fighters, weapons, and documents.

JUNE 28

34 rockets target U.S. troops in eastern Syria a day after U.S. airstrikes targeted Iran-backed militia groups blamed for UAV attacks in Iraq. No casualties are reported.

JUN

JUNE 25

ISIS attacks convoy of Iranian-backed pro-regime forces in Sukhnah in the Syrian desert, killing or wounding 25, including two senior officers of the Iranian Revolutionary Guard Corps.

JUNE 28

During the Syria Ministerial Meeting, Secretary of State Antony J. Blinken announces more than \$436 million in additional U.S. Government funding to support the humanitarian response in Syria and Syrian refugees in neighboring countries.

USCENTCOM reported that social unrest increased in northeastern Syria during the quarter, fueled not only by the security challenges but also by environmental and economic stressors.⁴⁹⁵ The region, which is administered by the SDF-affiliated SNES, faced drought conditions, oil shortages and additional economic pressure induced by the regime of Syrian President Bashar al-Assad, which is seeking to force increased trade with the SNES.⁴⁹⁶ Low rain levels resulted in decreased water levels in the Euphrates River, and are hindering agriculture production in the northeast as well, USCENTCOM and the DoS said.⁴⁹⁷

USCENTCOM reported that these conditions fueled increased unrest and violent demonstrations in northeastern Syria during the quarter.⁴⁹⁸ In addition, USCENTCOM reported that periodic clashes between the SDF and pro-regime forces continued to erupt in northeastern Syria during the quarter, especially in Qamishli where the rival forces operate in close proximity.⁴⁹⁹

COALITION ACTIVITY

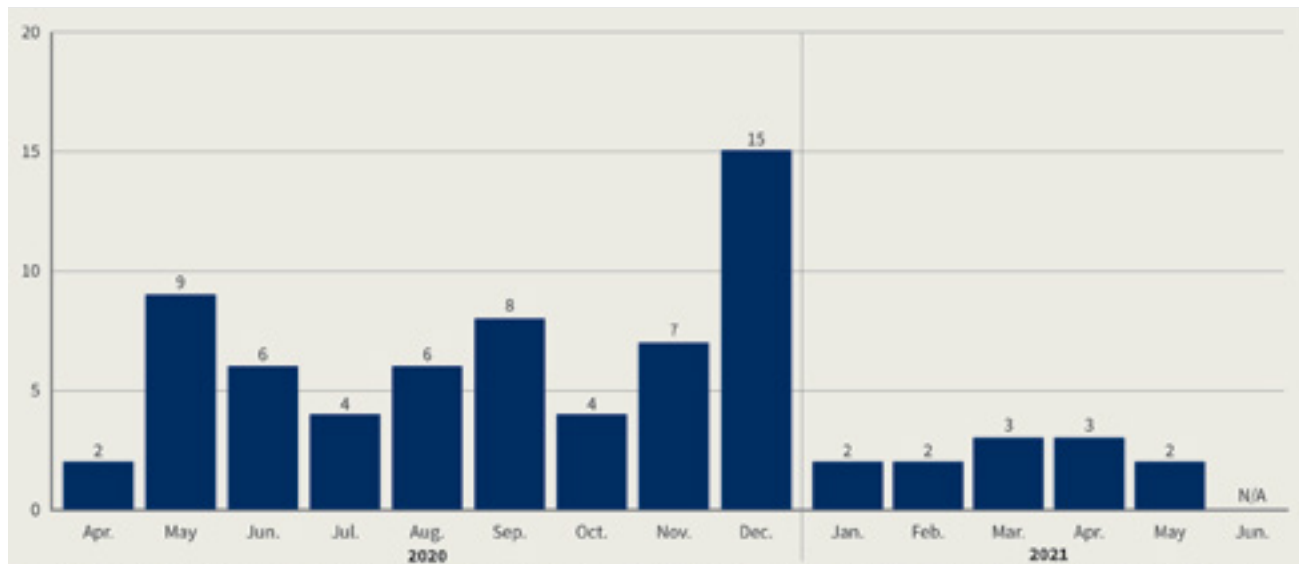
Coalition Supports Partner Force Counter-ISIS Operations, Conducts Deterrence Patrols

CJTF-OIR reported that the Coalition and their SDF partners maintained a pace of operations during the quarter sufficient to suppress ISIS and prevent a resurgence.⁵⁰⁰

Coalition forces also continued to project a show of force with the deployment of armored Bradley Fighting Vehicles in the ESSA.⁵⁰¹

Figure 7.

Coalition Airstrikes Targeting ISIS in Syria, April 2020–June 2021



Sources: CJTF-OIR, press releases, "CJTF-OIR Strike Summary Report," 2/13/2020, 3/24/2020, 4/30/2020, 6/24/2020, 9/8/2020, 10/29/2020, 12/14/2020, 1/6/2021, 2/4/2021, 7/6/2021, 7/7/2021, and 7/9/2021.

CJTF-OIR reported that the SDF slightly reduced its pace of operations compared to last quarter due to Ramadan, but continued to demonstrate an eagerness to learn and improve its ability to plan and conduct unilateral counter-ISIS operations.

CJTF-OIR said the Bradleys are deployed in Syria to enhance the force protection of U.S. forces, demonstrate the United States' willingness and ability to project force, and reassure partner forces.⁵⁰² CJTF-OIR said that the vehicles were not involved in any engagements with other forces during the quarter—including ISIS, Syrian regime, Russian or Iranian forces.⁵⁰³

CJTF-OIR reported that it conducted five airstrikes in Syria in April and May against ISIS targets.⁵⁰⁴ (See Figure 7.) Airstrike tallies for the remainder of the quarter were not available.

PARTNER FORCES CAPABILITIES AND DEVELOPMENT

SDF Operations Slow During Ramadan, Forces Continue to Improve Capabilities

CJTF-OIR reported that the SDF slightly reduced its pace of operations compared to last quarter due to Ramadan, but continued to demonstrate an eagerness to learn and improve its ability to plan and conduct unilateral counter-ISIS operations.⁵⁰⁵

CJTF-OIR said that SDF operations during the quarter included detention operations, capture or kill raids on IED facilitation and assassination cells, patrolling, and large-scale clearance operations with a focus on disrupting smuggling lines and maintaining pressure on ISIS.⁵⁰⁶

The SDF also conducted daytime patrols and maintained traffic control points as both a show of presence and to disrupt enemy movement.⁵⁰⁷ CJTF-OIR said the SDF placed a strong focus on basic counter-insurgency techniques.⁵⁰⁸ It also focused on encouraging leaders to train and educate subordinates, so they can better accomplish basic tasks with little to no guidance.⁵⁰⁹

CJTF-OIR said that the SDF Internal Security Forces-General Security, Hezen Anti-Terror (HAT) and SDF Commando units were the most active partner force units during the quarter, in part due to the higher operational tempo in the Middle Euphrates River Valley.⁵¹⁰ CJTF-OIR said that the capabilities of SDF Commando and HAT forces improved incrementally over the quarter and recent operations demonstrated greater coordination, as well as less need for Coalition supervision in several activities.⁵¹¹ CJTF-OIR said that “the continued suppression of organized ISIS activities at a significant scale, and their reliance upon harassing, disorganized tactics” was “implicit evidence” that SDF operations were effective.⁵¹² The forces demonstrated an eagerness for training to correct any gaps in their capabilities, CJTF-OIR said.⁵¹³

CJTF-OIR stated that reducing dependence on the Coalition remained a top priority.⁵¹⁴ To this end, Coalition support often remained off site during partner force operations and was only positioned at a forward location in exceptional circumstances, CJTF-OIR reported.⁵¹⁵

Partner forces also remained dependent on the Coalition for ISR support and assets.⁵¹⁶ CJTF-OIR said that in working with partner forces, the Coalition is consistently

U.S. Army Soldiers conduct training on a M777 Howitzer in Syria. (U.S. Army photo)



CJTF-OIR said that Coalition forces also continued training and partnering with approximately 300 MaT forces at the Tanf Garrison to further enhance their ability to conduct counter-ISIS missions.

emphasizing intelligence sharing and development.⁵¹⁷ CJTF-OIR said that resource limitations are an inherent challenge to partner forces in the development of mature and sustainable intelligence gathering abilities. However, partner forces also must overcome cultural obstacles to intelligence-sharing, such as individuals or units “hoarding information to preserve one’s relevance.”⁵¹⁸ CJTF-OIR said that while trust issues continued to exist among different SDF groups, there has been an increase in willingness to share information.⁵¹⁹ For example, CJTF-OIR said that the SDF demonstrated “diligent intelligence work” in its collection and review of information following operations at detention centers during the quarter.⁵²⁰

As in previous quarters, CJTF-OIR reported that the SDF’s lack of organic ISR capabilities meant the SDF continues to rely heavily on human intelligence networks for intelligence collection.⁵²¹ However, once the SDF receives targeting intelligence, they are able to effectively interpret it, act, and coordinate with Coalition forces.⁵²²

SDF Trains for Riot Control, Public Affairs and Biometrics in Addition to Counterterrorism Skills

CJTF-OIR reported that the Coalition continued to support the SDF by providing them with combat equipment, medical supplies, weapons, and ammunition. The Coalition also provided ISR assets when needed, hands-on weapons systems trainings, and after-action reviews.⁵²³ CJTF-OIR said the SOJTF-OIR trained the SDF in battlefield medicine, marksmanship, and the use of machine guns.⁵²⁴

In addition, SOJTF-OIR provided riot control and escalation of force training to the SDF in support of its operations at al-Hol humanitarian camp and detention centers.⁵²⁵ CJTF-OIR said that this training followed a basic level public affairs video, photography and newswriting training course for SDF in the previous quarter in preparation for the late March al-Hol security operation. The training was aimed at increasing the quality of photo and video products that partner forces would be able to disseminate.⁵²⁶ In addition, the forces were also trained on the use of biometric enrollment systems ahead of the al-Hol operation.⁵²⁷

MaT Forces Continue to Build Capabilities, Expand Training

CJTF-OIR said that Coalition forces also continued training and partnering with approximately 300 MaT forces at the Tanf Garrison to further enhance their ability to conduct counter-ISIS missions.⁵²⁸ CJTF-OIR said that the MaT are successful in conventional operations but rely on assets provided to them by Coalition forces.⁵²⁹ The MaT force’s capabilities continued to grow during the quarter with the training the Coalition provided, and CJTF-OIR assessed that the MaT’s counter-ISIS abilities will continue to improve with increased logistical support and resource procurement.⁵³⁰

The MaT conducted approximately 630 unilateral operations and 39 partnered operations during the quarter.⁵³¹ CJTF-OIR said that the MaT conducted daily wide area security missions throughout the deconfliction area, which prevented any incursions or smuggling incidents in the area.⁵³²

All of the MaT fighters in the area have been through rotations of basic soldier skills training in combat and medical tasks, CJTF-OIR said. During the quarter, MaT forces received tactical training with increased focus on technical skills and maneuvers.⁵³³ The Coalition also provided training in command structure and logistical processes training.⁵³⁴

The MaT force operates in isolated terrain, which presents significant logistical challenges.⁵³⁵ CJTF-OIR said that pro-regime forces built barriers that blocked the flow of supplies for the MaT force in the deconfliction area, a 55-kilometer (35-mile) zone around the Tanf Garrison, which is patrolled by U.S. and MaT forces.⁵³⁶ Neighboring countries Iraq and Jordan also restricted access to the area. In the past, Jordan sponsored a UN clinic for the Rukban IDP camp within the deconfliction area, but the nation closed its border due to COVID-19.⁵³⁷ CJTF-OIR said the MaT force was entirely dependent on Coalition logistical support during the quarter, but the force has increased its accountability by keeping records and actively tracking accountable items provided by the Coalition.⁵³⁸

SDF Updates Security Procedures at Key Detention Facility

CJTF-OIR continued to assist the SDF's efforts to increase the physical security and capacity of its facilities holding ISIS detainees in northeastern Syria, the vast majority of which were ad-hoc conversions versus hardened detention facilities.⁵³⁹ CJTF-OIR said it continues to work through the SDF to mitigate the risk of detainee breakouts.⁵⁴⁰

However, CJTF-OIR reiterated that reinforcing the detention facilities is a temporary measure that “gives the international community the time to develop a diplomatic and humanitarian response to deal appropriately with the ISIS detainees.”⁵⁴¹ U.S. officials have repeatedly said that the detention facilities were not a long-term solution and have urged the repatriation of ISIS fighters and their family members to their countries of origin for reintegration, rehabilitation, and prosecution, if appropriate.⁵⁴² CJTF-OIR continued to encourage the repatriation of foreign fighters and said that “the risk of riots, breakouts, or other disturbances that could return ISIS fighters to the organization’s ranks remains.”⁵⁴³

The number of suspected ISIS fighters in SDF custody remained largely unchanged this quarter. CJTF-OIR estimated that 2,000 of the 10,000 detained ISIS fighters are foreign fighters that came from outside Iraq and Syria. The remaining detainees, numbering approximately 8,000, are Iraqi and Syrian.⁵⁴⁴ CJTF-OIR said that the distribution of detainees also remained unchanged, with more than 60 percent being held in two SDF-run facilities in Hasakah governorate.⁵⁴⁵ Among the SDF facilities, there is one youth rehabilitation center in northeastern Syria and a second in the planning stage.⁵⁴⁶

According to CJTF-OIR, the SDF's ability to effectively manage detention facilities moderately improved during the quarter. With Coalition assistance, the SDF made improvements to its facilities and equipment that reduced overcrowding and improved security and living conditions. CJTF-OIR also continued to train and professionalize the facilities' guard force.⁵⁴⁷

CJTF-OIR reported that of the estimated 10,000 ISIS fighters that have been reported in SDF custody, there remained 2,000 from outside Iraq and Syria, while an unknown remainder of the approximately 8,000 Iraqi and Syrian ISIS fighters in SDF custody remained in detention this quarter.

During the quarter, U.S. forces conducted weekly patrols with SDF Critical Petroleum Infrastructure Guard (CPIG) forces in the northern portion of the ESSA around Qamishli, and periodic patrols with CPIG forces in the central and southern regions of the operating area.

In May, the SDF, with Coalition support, conducted a clearance operation and updated security procedures at a key detention facility in Hasakah governorate.⁵⁴⁸ Numerous detainee riots and attempted breakouts have occurred at the facility.⁵⁴⁹ CJTF-OIR reported that the operation involved clearing the cell blocks of contraband and biometrically enrolling detainees. SDF updates of security at the facility are ongoing and facilitated by CTEF funding and guard force training, CJTF-OIR said.⁵⁵⁰ The clearance operation did not result in any outbreak of violence against the Provincial Internal Security Forces (PrISF) who guard the detention facilities, likely due to the increased level of training of the guard force.⁵⁵¹ SDF updates to the detention facility included structural repairs, new COVID-19 health measures, enhanced security measures and a reorganization of detainee records.⁵⁵²

CJTF-OIR said that there was one escape from an SDF detention facility within the ESSA, but no riots or uprisings took place during the quarter.⁵⁵³

Critical Petroleum Infrastructure Badly Damaged, Vulnerable

The DIA reported that ISIS continued to pose a threat to critical petroleum infrastructure in Syria, particularly in the desert region of Dayr az Zawr governorate, where regime forces operate. In May, ISIS ambushed two regime-operated tankers transporting oil.⁵⁵⁴

During the quarter, U.S. forces conducted weekly patrols with SDF Critical Petroleum Infrastructure Guard (CPIG) forces in the northern portion of the ESSA around Qamishli, and periodic patrols with CPIG forces in the central and southern regions of the operating area.⁵⁵⁵ CJTF-OIR reported that 2,500 trained CPIG forces continued to be deployed to protect 64 oil infrastructure sites across the ESSA.⁵⁵⁶ Of those, 500 are posted in the northern ESSA, 500 in the central ESSA and 1,500 operated in the Dayr az Zawr area.⁵⁵⁷

CJTF-OIR reported that the CPIG does not patrol in the northern sector due to its proximity to the Turkish border.⁵⁵⁸ While the partnered patrols in that region did not encounter any enemy engagements, CPIG forces in the central and southern sectors frequently reported that ISIS conducted harassing nighttime attacks.⁵⁵⁹ CJTF-OIR said that the CPIG has recently begun to organize a dedicated quick reaction force to respond to attacks. However, this force lacks the needed vehicles and heavy weapons for it to operate.⁵⁶⁰

Additionally, during the quarter, approximately 500 new recruits were training at the CPIG academy in the northern ESSA. However, CJTF-OIR reported that it was understood that the recruits would be distributed among forces when they completed their training, and not necessarily assigned to the CPIG.⁵⁶¹

Oil infrastructure in SDF-controlled portions of Dayr az Zawr governorate remains badly damaged, limiting the amount of crude it is able to produce.⁵⁶² The DIA, citing public reporting, said that as of earlier this year, approximately 180 tankers transported an estimated 30,000 barrels of oil per day from northeastern Syria to regime-controlled areas.⁵⁶³ According to OPEC data, prior to the outbreak of the Syria war in 2011, Syria produced 333,000 barrels of oil per day, which was transported partially through the now inoperable pipeline and partly by truck, the DIA said.⁵⁶⁴

Role of Third Parties

The crowded military operating environment in Syria continued to impact the OIR mission during the quarter. SDF and Coalition forces in the ESSA operated against ISIS fighters, but also continued to face security threats or challenges from Syrian regime forces, regime-backed militias and their Russia or Iranian backers.⁵⁶⁵ Clashes flared up between the SDF and Turkish or Turkish-backed Syrian Opposition forces along the Turkish border, where tensions have been heightened since Turkey's 2019 incursions across the border.⁵⁶⁶

REGIME, RUSSIA, TURKEY, IRAN-BACKED FORCES ATTACK ISIS

Pro-regime forces and their Russian allies continued counterterrorism operations against ISIS in the Syria desert during the quarter, the DIA reported. Media and observers reported that Russian forces conducted hundreds of airstrikes on ISIS targets in support of the Syrian regime.⁵⁶⁷ The DIA reported that this was in part in response to an increase in June to ISIS operations against regime forces in June.⁵⁶⁸ The DIA said that despite continued raids against ISIS in the central desert, pro-regime forces and their Russian allies were unable to eliminate the remaining ISIS operatives who attacked regime forces.⁵⁶⁹

As noted earlier in this report, Turkish forces also routinely conducted raids and detained ISIS members during the quarter, reducing ISIS's cross-border movement and activity, USEUCOM reported.⁵⁷⁰

The DIA reported that Iran-backed forces, while focused on supporting pro-regime operations in Syria, also continued to support operations against ISIS. In particular, these forces targeted ISIS on the outskirts of Damascus, near strategic towns and villages along the Lebanon-Syria border, and in Dayr az Zawr governorate, where Iran maintains a supply route from Iraq to its forces and partners in Syria and Lebanon.⁵⁷¹

IRAN-BACKED FORCES CONDUCT RARE ATTACK ON COALITION FORCES IN SYRIA

This quarter, Iran-backed forces attacked Coalition forces in Syria. According to press reporting, the attack came hours after the June 27 U.S. strikes that targeted Iran-backed militia facilities in western Iraq and eastern Syria.⁵⁷² According to the OIR spokesman, 34 122-millimeter artillery rockets targeted U.S. forces in Syria but there were no casualties or injuries. U.S. forces responded with counter-battery artillery fire and a UAV-launched Hellfire missile on the position from where the rockets originated, reportedly wounding one enemy combatant.⁵⁷³

No specific group claimed responsibility for the attack. According to media sources, video of the attack was circulated on Telegram channels associated with Iran-aligned militias.⁵⁷⁴ Prior to the attack, the DIA reported that Iran-backed forces probably retain the ability to conduct rocket and IED attacks against U.S. interests in Syria with little warning.⁵⁷⁵ The DIA said that based on press reporting, it assessed that Iran maintains the ability to conduct more complex attacks using advanced weapons, specifically noting that Iran-backed militias had employed UAVs to attack U.S. forces in Iraq.⁵⁷⁶ However, the DIA said these systems had not been used to attack U.S. forces in Syria.⁵⁷⁷

Iran-backed groups have previously threatened to attack U.S. forces in Syria, and on January 13 fired rockets at the same Coalition base according to media reports.⁵⁷⁸ Additionally, several past incidents required U.S. forces in Syria to act in self-defense against suspected Iranian and Iran-backed forces. In May 2017, press sources reported that an Iran-backed militia advanced close enough to the Coalition base at Tanf to provoke a U.S. airstrike to halt the militia convoy.⁵⁷⁹ In June 2017, according to media reports, two armed Iranian-produced UAVs were shot down by U.S. aircraft after also coming too close

to Tanf, with one UAV reportedly releasing a munition near the U.S. garrison. U.S. officials told reporters at the time they were not aware of who exactly was operating the UAVs, but that the type had been provided to the Syrian regime and to Lebanese Hezbollah.⁵⁸⁰

The DIA added that Iran and Iran-backed forces, notably the Iraqi militia Kata'ib Hezbollah, continued to operate in Syria with a key goal of expelling U.S. forces from the country.⁵⁸¹ The DIA reported that since last quarter, Iran continued to build connections with select Arab tribes in the eastern part of Syria, probably seeking to expand its influence and potentially to support operations against U.S. forces.⁵⁸²

RUSSIAN FORCES CONTINUE TO VIOLATE DE-CONFLICTION PROTOCOLS, PRESS FOR U.S. WITHDRAWAL

The DIA reported that Russian forces continued to violate de-confliction protocols and “pressure U.S. forces in Syria,” by distracting, harassing, and constraining them. The DIA said that Russia’s goal continued to be to compel the United States to withdraw its forces from northeastern Syria.⁵⁸³

CJTF-OIR did not provide publicly releasable information about Russian compliance with de-confliction protocols during the quarter. In the previous quarter, CJTF-OIR reported that while Russian forces largely adhered to the protocols, small-scale violations such as adding vehicles to a convoy without notification, had increased.⁵⁸⁴

REGIME FORCES AND THEIR ALLIES CONFRONT SDF IN QAMISHLI

CJTF-OIR reported that during the quarter, the Russian forces increased their presence at the Qamishli airport, and that the site was used by Iran’s Revolutionary Guard Corps to hold meetings with other malign actors.⁵⁸⁵ The DIA said that Russian and pro-regime force dispositions have not changed substantially since last quarter and the forces continued to exert pressure on U.S. forces in northeastern Syria while engaging with the SDF and local population.⁵⁸⁶

The DIA said that the Syrian regime continued its efforts to influence local communities in Hasakah governorate to oppose the SDF. The DIA said pro-regime tribes likely pose an additional obstacle for the SDF in Hasakah by absorbing attention that the SDF could otherwise focus on the D-ISIS mission.⁵⁸⁷ The DIA assessed that the regime probably seeks to build a strong tribal support base for a pro-regime authority in the northeast that could displace the SDF. But while the regime has strong alliances with some tribes, the regime has so far been unsuccessful at assembling a coherent tribal force.⁵⁸⁸

Clashes erupted again this quarter between pro-regime and SDF forces in Hasakah governorate. The DIA said that the pro-regime National Defense Forces (NDF) contingent in Qamishli recruits local tribesmen, particularly members of the Tayy tribe, and the fighting between the NDF and SDF in Qamishli occurred in the Tayy neighborhood that the tribe dominates.⁵⁸⁹

CJTF-OIR said clashes erupted after the NDF killed a member of the SDF’s Internal Security Forces, and the SDF responded with operations against the NDF in Qamishli’s Tayy neighborhood.⁵⁹⁰ According to CJTF-OIR, Russia dispatched reinforcements from the Syrian Arab Army 5th Corps to support the NDF, while it worked to mediate a ceasefire. CJTF-OIR said two ceasefires failed before Russia mediated a successful end to the clashes on April 25, 5 days after they began.⁵⁹¹

(continued on next page)

Role of Third Parties *(continued from previous page)*

CJTF-OIR reported that Russia deployed military police to monitor the ceasefire, which held as of May 29.⁵⁹² CJTF-OIR said that during the fighting, the SDF seized three neighborhoods in Qamishli from the NDF. Under the ceasefire, the SDF permitted residents displaced by the fighting to return to their homes.⁵⁹³ CJTF-OIR said NDF suffered substantial losses in the fighting and initiated a recruiting drive in Dayr az-Zawr to replenish their numbers.⁵⁹⁴

CJTF-OIR reported that the clashes probably began as a result of the regime's "poor command and control" over its supporting militia elements and assessed that both Russia and the regime will "almost certainly" work to restrain militia groups from overt operations against the SDF to prevent further territorial losses.⁵⁹⁵

TURKEY AND ALIGNED FORCES CONTINUE TO CLASH WITH SDF FORCES IN NORTH

The DIA reported that Turkish and Turkish-supported forces continue to clash with the SDF along the Turkish border in northern Syria.⁵⁹⁶ Turkey views the SDF as an extension of the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK), a U.S.-designated terrorist organization that has waged a longtime deadly insurgency against Turkey. In particular, Turkey claims that the People's Protection Units (YPG), which make up the largest portion of the SDF, are directly linked to the Syrian branch of the PKK.⁵⁹⁷

The DIA said that according to Turkish press, Turkey claimed an increase in attacks by other parties targeting areas it controls in northern Syria during the quarter, including from SDF-held areas of Manbij, Ayn Issa, and Tal Rifaat.⁵⁹⁸ Throughout the quarter, Turkish media reported on attacks attributed to the YPG and Turkish operations that captured or killed YPG suspects that Turkey believed were responsible for attacks, the DIA reported.⁵⁹⁹

After the Turkish incursion in 2019, Russia helped mediate a ceasefire that included joint patrols to separate Turkish and SDF forces. The DIA reported that during the quarter, Russian and Turkish forces carried out a joint patrol in the Qamishli district.⁶⁰⁰ Russian officials cited in a media report said the patrol was unique because it covered a distance of more than 60 miles and included a large number of towns.⁶⁰¹



Internal Security Force officers observe a checkpoint in the Busayra area of Dayr az Zawr, where ISIS attacks remain common, through CCTV provided by START-NEA's community security program (Al Rashad). (DoS photo)

STABILIZATION

During the quarter all U.S. Government stabilization programs in northeast Syria that were active last quarter continued, although some programs operated at reduced levels to preserve limited funding.⁶⁰² Stabilization projects engaged local governance actors, civil society, and Syrian communities to support education, community security, independent media, civil society organizations, transitional justice, accountability, restoration of essential services, and a political resolution to the Syrian conflict in line with UNSCR 2254.⁶⁰³ According to the DoS, stabilization assistance is a critical element in the OIR mission because it mitigates the economic and social cleavages previously exploited by ISIS, closes gaps in local authority capacity, and supports civil society to advocate for citizen needs.⁶⁰⁴

The U.S. Government will not provide any reconstruction funding to regime-held areas in Syria until it ceases to be a state sponsor of terrorism; does not threaten its neighbors; verifiably dismantles and surrenders its weapons of mass destruction; creates conditions for the safe, voluntary, and dignified return of refugees and internally displaced persons; and holds accountable those who have committed war crimes or crimes against humanity.⁶⁰⁵

Programs Supported Essential Services, Community Security, Media, and Livelihoods

During the quarter, DoS- and USAID-funded programs supported stabilization in several sectors, including essential services, community security, media, and vocational skills development in northeast Syria.⁶⁰⁶

For example, in Hasakah city, the \$1.8 million DoS-facilitated capacity-building program FURAT+ (Furat is the Arabic word for Euphrates) partnered with the executive council of the Jazirah region and the Dayr az Zawr civil council on a large-scale water restoration

initiative.⁶⁰⁷ Hasakah city and its surrounding countryside, home to 1 million people and a haven for the displaced, has suffered from a serious shortage of drinking water.⁶⁰⁸ Between January and May, FURAT+ and its partners repaired water pipelines, replaced electrical grids, and rehabilitated old lift stations to connect Suwar Canal to Hasakah city, restoring nearly 90 miles of pipeline and replacing 32 miles of electrical network.⁶⁰⁹ The DoS said that following final testing and repairs, which were underway as of the end of the quarter, water will flow through the Suwar Canal and pipelines to Hasakah city for the first time since its liberation from ISIS in 2015.⁶¹⁰

In Dayr az Zawr governorate, the DoS START-funded al-Rashad project worked with internal security forces and local councils to rehabilitate and equip security checkpoints in the Busayra area of the governorate. This area is known as the “Death Triangle” for the frequency of violence, including ISIS attacks.⁶¹¹ The DoS said this work improved the internal security forces’ ability to maintain security in the area, which enables additional stabilization activities to proceed safely. This effort also helped build trust between the security forces and the communities they serve by demonstrating that security providers were willing and able to keep them safe.⁶¹²

Also during the quarter, the DoS’s Support to Media in Syria II program partnered with eight online, radio, and television media organizations in northeast and northwest Syria which gave communities platforms to discuss the needs of religious and ethnic minority communities, promote officials’ accountability, and counter extremism and disinformation perpetuated by Iran-backed militias, Russia, the Syrian regime, designated terrorist organizations, and other malign actors.⁶¹³

USAID’s Syria Livelihoods Program provided vocational skill development training in heating, ventilation, and cooling (HVAC) and home appliance maintenance, mobile phone repair, and electrical maintenance to 30 young men and women trainees through a local civil society organization in Hajin. The trainees also received small business coaching and mentoring. The business training included business and project management principles, profit and loss analysis, and accounting basics. At the end of the training, the trainees received trade tools for their new vocations.⁶¹⁴ USAID reported that the Syria Livelihoods Program also established a vocational training center in Tabqa and provided vocational training for 40 young men and women in home appliance maintenance, solar panel repair and maintenance, and media and digital marketing. The trainees received practical and on-the-job training as part of the vocational skill development.⁶¹⁵

Presidential Election Neither Free nor Fair

The DoS reported that there were no changes in progress toward reaching a political resolution in line with UNSCR 2254 this quarter. The Syrian Constitutional Committee (a group of 150 Syrian men and women whose selection was facilitated by the United Nations) did not meet during quarter, and the next meeting date has not been determined.⁶¹⁶ United Nations Special Envoy Geir Pedersen told the UN Security Council that “if we continue like this, if key players are more invested in conflict management than conflict resolution, I fear that Syria will become another protracted conflict, lasting generations.”⁶¹⁷

According to the DoS, the Syrian presidential election held on May 26 was neither free nor fair, and the election was “widely derided as a sham.”

UNSCR 2254 stipulates that parties to the conflict in Syria should take steps towards holding free and fair elections pursuant to a new constitution, administered under the supervision of the United Nations, in which all Syrians, including members of the diaspora, can participate.⁶¹⁸

According to the DoS, the Syrian presidential election held on May 26 was neither free nor fair, and the election was “widely derided as a sham.”⁶¹⁹ Secretary Blinken issued a joint statement with foreign ministers of the United Kingdom, France, Germany, and Italy condemning the election.⁶²⁰ In the statement, the ministers denounced the Assad regime’s decision to hold an election outside of the framework outlined in UNSCR 2254. The ministers affirmed their support of the Syrians who condemned the electoral process as illegitimate and reiterated their support for the UN Special Envoy for Syria’s efforts to promote a political settlement, based on all aspects of UNSCR 2254, which protects the future prosperity and rights of all Syrians.⁶²¹

The DoS reported that inside Syria, voting occurred in regime-held areas and not in areas controlled by the SDF, Turkish-supported opposition (TSO) groups and Turkey-backed civilian councils, and Hay’at Tahrir al-Sham (a U.S.-designated foreign terrorist organization).⁶²²

The DoS said that lack of access to and awareness of the political process to resolve the Syrian conflict, including UNSCR 2254, has led to distrust and a lack of support for the current efforts of the Syrian Constitutional Committee.⁶²³ During the quarter, the DoS supported workshops and dialogue sessions with political process stakeholders that were designed to strengthen participants’ ability to take part in the Constitutional Committee and other UN-convened negotiations in support of the political process outlined in UNSCR 2254.⁶²⁴ The workshops and dialogue sessions were intended to ensure the Constitutional Committee bridges the gap between local community-based organizations and their local constituents by facilitating political inclusivity, knowledge sharing, and outreach, the DoS said.⁶²⁵ The sessions also fostered engagement with Syrian civil society organizations, local governance structures, and Syrian citizens, including members of the Syrian diaspora, according to the DoS.⁶²⁶

The DoS emphasized that stability in Syria and the greater region should be achieved through a political process to produce peaceful outcomes in Syria. The DoS stated that the U.S. Government will not “normalize or upgrade [U.S.] diplomatic relations with the Assad regime, nor will [the United States] provide reconstruction assistance to Syria until we see irreversible progress on the political track.”⁶²⁷

Turkish-supported Opposition Groups’ Alleged Crimes Undermined D-ISIS Efforts

The DoS said that it continued to receive reports of violence in the TSO-controlled Turkish incursion area in northeast Syria.⁶²⁸ The DoS reported this quarter that TSO groups have been accused of violence against Kurds, Yazidis, and Christians that included killings, torture and sexual violence, kidnapping, forced displacement, extortion, and the prevention of returns of displaced Syrians to their homes in areas under Turkish control.⁶²⁹

The DoS said it was concerned about reports that TSO groups engaged in gross violations of human rights abuses and violations under the law of armed conflict in northeast Syria and said that it has raised the matter with the Turkish government, the Syrian Interim Government, and the TSO groups themselves. The U.S. Government has pressed for the investigation of these allegations and accountability for those found responsible. Additionally, infighting between TSO factions led to a “deterioration in security” in parts of northern Syria, and has resulted in civilian deaths. The DoS reported these activities are destabilizing as they exacerbate sectarian tensions and undermine efforts to ensure the enduring defeat of ISIS.⁶³⁰

Limited Progress in Repatriation of Displaced Persons, Fighters

The successful reintegration of displaced persons into their home communities is a critical component of the D-ISIS Coalition’s broader stabilization efforts. The DoS said that smooth reintegration of displaced persons, including from the al-Hol and Roj displaced persons camps, is critical to eliminate the social isolation and economic dislocation that ISIS seeks to exploit to regain a foothold in northeastern Syria.⁶³¹

As of the end of the quarter, the al-Hol population had dropped to just under 60,000, of whom 51 percent are Iraqis, 34 percent are Syrians, and 15 percent are third-country nationals.⁶³² The majority (84 percent) of the more than 2,500 Roj camp residents are third-country nationals, with small additional numbers of Iraqis and Syrians; 67 percent of the Roj population are children.⁶³³

As discussed on page 59, Iraqi Ministry of Displacement and Migration repatriated 93 Iraqi families (381 individuals, including 233 children) from al-Hol camp in northeast Syria. This is the first group of the 500 families the Iraqi government has committed to repatriate from al-Hol and the first formal returns of Iraqis from al-Hol since September 2018.⁶³⁴

In addition to those repatriated to Iraq during the quarter, the DoS reported that Russia repatriated 34 orphans and the Netherlands repatriated 1 woman and 3 children. CJTF-OIR supported an operation that repatriated 24 women and 69 children to Uzbekistan.⁶³⁵ The DoS reported that, as of June 10, 457 Syrians departed al-Hol Camp during the quarter for their home communities, with about half returning to Dayr az Zawr governorate and the other half to Kobani in Aleppo governorate.⁶³⁶

The DoS reported that foreign terrorist fighters’ countries of origin continue to show varying willingness to repatriate their nationals from Syria. Some countries proactively repatriate fighters and associated family members, while others remain reluctant to do so. The DoS said it prioritized repatriation to countries of origin and engaged allies and local partners on options to return their citizens.⁶³⁷

The Department of Justice (DoJ) reported that its attaché is currently preparing for deployment to the U.S. Embassy in Baghdad, pending authorization by the Chief of Mission.⁶³⁸ Meanwhile, the DoJ reported, the DoJ National Security Division continued to provide a full-time, in-country attorney in Iraq to support matters related to evidence

As of the end of the quarter, the al-Hol population had dropped to just under 60,000, of whom 51 percent are Iraqis, 34 percent are Syrians, and 15 percent are third-country nationals.

On June 2, the DoS Office of the Special Envoy for the Global Coalition to Defeat ISIS was moved from the Office of the Secretary to the Bureau of Counterterrorism.

gathering and prosecutions of “foreign terrorist suspects”—ISIS suspects from third countries detained in Syria, as well as other terrorist suspects.⁶³⁹ The attaché supported reviews of intelligence and available information to determine if criminal prosecution could be brought against terrorism suspects, including those being detained in Syria as well as in other countries.⁶⁴⁰ The DoJ said the attaché and U.S.-based prosecutors in Washington, DC received training specifically related to countering terrorist financing during the quarter and worked with foreign partners on additional training modules.⁶⁴¹

D-ISIS Special Envoy Office Moved to Bureau of Counterterrorism

On June 2, the DoS Office of the Special Envoy for the Global Coalition to Defeat ISIS was moved from the Office of the Secretary to the Bureau of Counterterrorism. The DoS said this move would ensure a “unified and integrated approach to this vital mission.”⁶⁴² It said that the merger also nests the D-ISIS functions within larger global counterterrorism efforts that are led by the Counterterrorism Bureau, placing D-ISIS efforts within an “enduring institutional framework.”⁶⁴³

HUMANITARIAN ASSISTANCE

The U.S. Government, through USAID and the DoS, works with the United Nations, international and nongovernmental organizations, and local Syrian organizations to deliver aid to those in need in Syria.⁶⁴⁴ U.S. humanitarian funding supports the provision of emergency food, health, livelihoods, shelter, and water, sanitation, and hygiene services for internally displaced persons and other vulnerable populations in Syria and Syrian refugees in the region.⁶⁴⁵

During the reporting period, the DoS and USAID reported that the challenges facing humanitarian assistance implementers in Syria had not significantly changed since the previous quarter.⁶⁴⁶ These challenges include long-standing issues, such as the persistent decline of the economy, pandemic-related restrictions on group gatherings and mobility, and the uncertainty of the outcome of the UN Security Council reauthorization of the Bab al-Hawa border crossing, which all remained top issues for the humanitarian response.⁶⁴⁷ USAID noted a new challenge to both the need and the provision of humanitarian assistance: increased water insecurity in northeast Syria, stemming from low water levels in the Euphrates River.⁶⁴⁸

Drought Conditions Increase Need

Water insecurity remained a concern for humanitarian assistance implementers in Syria during the quarter. The UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) reported more than 20 disruptions to the Alouk water station over the past year, affecting the water supply of more than a half million people across the region, including those residing in camps such as al-Hol and Arishah and in informal settlements.⁶⁴⁹ USAID reported that its water, sanitation, and hygiene partners quickly mobilized to deliver water by truck. However, their efforts were insufficient to fully compensate for the 4,000 cubic meters per hour of clean water that Alouk typically supplies.⁶⁵⁰

SYRIA: U.S. ASSISTANCE SNAPSHOT

April 1, 2021–June 30, 2021

ALEPPO On June 12, missiles and artillery struck the al-Shifa'a Hospital in Afrin city—one of the largest medical facilities in northern Syria—resulting in the deaths of at least 13 people. The attacks fully destroyed the hospital's emergency department and delivery room and partially damaged the outpatient clinic, prompting the hospital to cease operations and evacuate patients to nearby facilities. Humanitarian organizations reported that they had previously shared the hospital's coordinates through the UN-led deconfliction mechanism used to protect civilian and humanitarian sites.

HAMAH The Syrian Civil Defense, also known as the White Helmets, reported that one volunteer died in an artillery attack in western Hamah province on June 19. The White Helmets reported that the attack destroyed the organization's emergency service and rescue center in the area, rendering it inoperable. 290 White Helmets volunteers have died while responding to the Syria crisis.

IDLIB/BAB AL-HAWA More than 8 out of 10 people in need in northwest Syria are reached through cross-border aid. Since the beginning of cross-border assistance in 2014, the UN has sent approximately 45,000 trucks from Turkey through the Bab al-Hawa and the Bab al-Salam crossings, carrying food, nutrition, and health assistance. Since 2020, Bab al-Hawa has been the sole authorized crossing point for UN assistance, significantly impacting access to the northern Aleppo area.



13.4 million
In Need of Humanitarian Assistance
UN–March 2021

6.7 million
Displaced Persons
UN–March 2021

4.8 million
People Reached by USAID BHA per Month
UN–May 2021

2.1 million
People Reached by DoS PRM per Month
UN–November 2020

STABILIZATION

- **Suwar Canal linked to Hasakah city:** After final testing, water may now flow through 90 miles of pipelines to 1 million people for the first time since 2019.
- **Al-Busayra:** Security checkpoints rehabilitated and equipped in former “Death Triangle” Busayra area in Dayr az Zawr.
- **Raqqah/Dayr az Zawr Provinces:** Rehabilitated water and sanitation facilities for nearly 50,000 students.

COVID-19 VACCINE ROLL-OUT

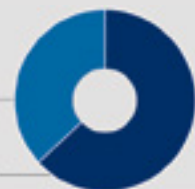
More than **400,000** COVID vaccine doses have been delivered, enough to cover **2.4 percent** of the population

Allocated (COVAX)
1,360,000

Doses

150,000
China–Sinopharm

256,800
COVAX–AstraZeneca/SII



Sources: UN OCHA, “OCHA Iraq Humanitarian Bulletin May 2021,” 6/4/2021; UN OCHA, “Recent Developments in Northwest Syria—Situation Report No. 28,” 7/8/2021; USAID, “Syria: Complex Emergency Fact Sheet # 8,” 6/28/2021; USAID BHA, response to USAID OIG request for information, 6/25/2021; Reuters, “Syria Gets Donation of 150,000 COVID Shots from China,” 4/24/2021; DoS, vetting comment, 7/20/2021.

USAID reported that since April 17, low water flows reduced the hydroelectric potential of the Tishrin and Tabqah dams, resulting in major power blackouts across northeast Syria.

Water levels in the Euphrates River began falling in February due to regional drought and subsequent reduction of transboundary flows of water from Turkey into northeast Syria. The river's levels reached a critically low level in May 2021.⁶⁵¹ As of June 14, the nearly 5.5 million people in Syria served by the Euphrates River had to rely on expensive trucked water sources or had no access to adequate water supplies.⁶⁵² This degraded efforts to control the spread of the COVID-19 virus, USAID said, as access to water and sanitation are essential in the fight against COVID-19. In addition, low water levels led to increased water pollution and resultant waterborne illnesses, such as diarrhea, among populations that rely on the Euphrates River for safe drinking water.⁶⁵³

USAID reported that since April 17, low water flows reduced the hydroelectric potential of the Tishrin and Tabqah dams, resulting in major power blackouts across northeast Syria.⁶⁵⁴ During the quarter, households received an average of 5 to 6 hours of power a day, in comparison to an average of 12 hours per day in January 2021. This, combined with low rainfall levels, will likely significantly reduce this year's wheat production in northeast Syria, where 70 percent of Syria's wheat is produced, USAID said.⁶⁵⁵ Kurdish officials announced that wheat yields in northeast Syria were expected to amount to 500,000 tons this year, less than last year's 850,000-ton output. Although the humanitarian community is seeking solutions to northeast Syria's water crisis, USAID reported that it is evident that this climactic and "hydro-political" issue will remain a long-term fixture of Syria's humanitarian landscape.⁶⁵⁶

COVID-19 Vaccination Begins in Syria as Pandemic Continues to Impact Humanitarian Assistance

During the quarter, Syria received 256,800 doses of the AstraZeneca vaccine from the Serum Institute of India through COVAX, the international initiative to deliver COVID-19 vaccines around the world. COVAX delivered 203,000 doses to Damascus to be distributed in regime-held areas and northeast Syria. The WHO and the UN Children's Emergency Fund (UNICEF) delivered 53,800 doses through the Bab al-Hawa crossing.⁶⁵⁷ COVAX pledged 1.02 million doses of vaccine for regime- and SNES-administered areas and 336,000 doses to northwest Syria which would vaccinate 20 percent of the population.⁶⁵⁸ The Syrian regime also accepted bilateral donations of Sinopharm from China and Sputnik V from Russia, according to media reports.⁶⁵⁹

As of June 21, health workers had administered 108,276 vaccine doses.⁶⁶⁰ Frontline health workers and high-risk populations were prioritized to receive this first shipment of vaccines; as of May 24, more than 10,000 healthcare and humanitarian workers in northwest Syria had received the vaccine.⁶⁶¹

However, many challenges to the procurement and distribution of vaccines remain. The Indian government placed a temporary hold on COVID-19 vaccine exports due to a surge in COVID-19 cases in India, which delayed the delivery of the remaining pledged vaccines.⁶⁶² In addition, USAID noted that vaccine hesitancy among the general population, stemming from mistrust of government institutions and global media coverage of harmful side effects, may challenge the widespread uptake of life-saving vaccines.⁶⁶³

As of early June, medical humanitarian groups confirmed more than 66,200 COVID-19 cases in Syria, including 3,200 recorded deaths.⁶⁶⁴ The burden in displaced persons camps was high; OCHA estimated 10.9 percent of all COVID-19 cases were in camps.⁶⁶⁵ USAID said that actual COVID-19 cases were likely higher than the reported figure due to community stigmatization, reluctance to go to hospitals, fear of income loss, and limited testing capacity.⁶⁶⁶ During the quarter, Médecins Sans Frontières reported that COVID-19 test positivity rates in northeast Syria were as high as 47 percent, which indicated that many cases were missed due to limited testing.⁶⁶⁷ A recent Nature study of the first wave of COVID-19 deaths in Damascus estimated that only 1.25 percent of COVID-19 deaths were reported.⁶⁶⁸

During the quarter, USAID supported COVID-19 health response capacity in Syria by providing primary healthcare services through mobile medical units, training Syrian medical workers, and providing equipment to health facilities.⁶⁶⁹ During the quarter USAID worked with the Dayr az Zawr Health Committee to build an operational medical grade oxygen refilling plant in an old warehouse. It has the capacity to produce 100 medical oxygen cylinders in an 8-hour period.⁶⁷⁰ The new plant now produces approximately 100 40-liter medical oxygen cylinders per day. According to USAID, the locally sourced oxygen cylinders were being refilled, transported, and distributed to local hospitals.⁶⁷¹

USAID reported that COVID-19 restrictions on mobility and group gatherings continued to delay programming.⁶⁷² COVID-19 mitigation measures also limited humanitarian worker access to displaced persons camps.⁶⁷³ USAID BHA cited these justifications for three modifications to either terminate or extend periods of performance on humanitarian assistance awards at no cost.⁶⁷⁴ Implementers conducted digital and limited in-person activities but reported significant challenges in maintaining programming.⁶⁷⁵

Border Crossing Closures Restrict Flow of Humanitarian Aid

From July 2014 to early 2020, the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) authorized UN agencies and their partners to use four border crossings into Syria. These crossings included Bab al-Hawa and Bab al-Salam between Turkey and northwest Syria, al-Yarubiyah between Iraq and northeast Syria, and al-Ramtha between Jordan and southwest Syria.⁶⁷⁶ During a 6-month period in 2020, Russia and China vetoed the reauthorizations of the Bab al-Salam, al-Yarubiyah, and al-Ramtha crossings, leaving the Bab al-Hawa as the only remaining UN-operated border crossing into Syria. On July 9, 2021, the UNSC unanimously passed UNSC Resolution 2585, which reauthorizes Bab al-Hawa for six months with an extension of an additional six months—until July 10, 2022—subject to the issuance of a UN Secretary General report detailing progress on crossline humanitarian assistance and operational transparency.⁶⁷⁷ This vote followed intensive advocacy on the part of the U.S. Government and major humanitarian groups for the renewal of UNSC Resolution 2533 and for the additional reopening of the Bab al-Salam and al-Yarubiyah border crossings.⁶⁷⁸

The Bab al-Hawa border crossing is the only land-based option for humanitarian aid delivered into northwest Syria.⁶⁷⁹ More than 1,000 trucks cross through Bab al-Hawa monthly.⁶⁸⁰ Russian diplomats expressed their belief that humanitarian assistance should all move crossline from regime-controlled areas. The United States, the United Nations,

As of early June, medical humanitarian groups confirmed more than 66,200 COVID-19 cases in Syria, including 3,200 recorded deaths.

The WHO has reported that if the Bab al-Hawa border crossing is closed, then 97 percent of the population in northwest Syria will not have access to the COVID-19 vaccine, effectively halting UN plans to have 20 percent of the population vaccinated by the end of the year.

and the humanitarian aid community strongly disagree, noting that crossline capacity is insufficient to meet the scope and scale of humanitarian need in northwest Syria.⁶⁸¹

USAID said that significant gaps in humanitarian assistance will emerge if the Bab al-Hawa border crossing is not reauthorized and that local partners are not appropriately equipped to handle the crisis.⁶⁸² Humanitarian organizations reported that 50 percent of local Syrian humanitarian organizations in northwest Syria rely entirely on UN funding and cross-border operations.⁶⁸³ USAID reported that the Bab al-Hawa crossing allows for aid to be provided to more than 4 million people, of which 2.4 million rely solely on humanitarian aid to meet basic needs.⁶⁸⁴ USAID reported that the loss of Bab al-Hawa would result in 1.4 million people losing access to clean water.⁶⁸⁵ Humanitarian groups reported in June that 57 percent of people in the region already do not have access to any form of running water.⁶⁸⁶

In advance of the vote, humanitarian assistance implementers advocated for the reauthorization of cross-border assistance and planned for the worst-case scenario.⁶⁸⁷ Prior closures of border crossings have led to deterioration of humanitarian conditions. During this report, the DoS reported that the January 2020 closing of the al-Yarubiyah border crossing dramatically worsened human suffering, including the availability of medical supplies. Prior to the closing, 70 percent of medical supplies for 1.8 million people living in northeast Syria came through al-Yarubiyah.⁶⁸⁸

The WHO has reported that if the Bab al-Hawa border crossing is closed, then 97 percent of the population in northwest Syria would not have access to the COVID-19 vaccine, effectively halting UN plans to have 20 percent of the population vaccinated by the end of the year.⁶⁸⁹ USAID reports that the closure would result in shortages of healthcare supplies, personal protective equipment, and sanitizing equipment, hindering prevention of COVID-19 infection.⁶⁹⁰ Medical humanitarian groups report that the Bab al-Hawa crossing is essential in addressing the COVID-19 pandemic in Syria.⁶⁹¹

The DoS reported that the importance of the UN cross-border assistance vote was highlighted by U.S. Ambassador to the United Nations Linda Thomas-Greenfield while conducting a 3-day official visit to Turkey to advocate for passage of the resolution.⁶⁹² During the visit, she announced an additional \$239 million in USAID funding, which the agency reports is aimed at reiterating the United States' commitment to ending the humanitarian aid crisis in Syria.⁶⁹³

U.S. Funds Assistance for Syrian Children as Needs Increase

A decade of conflict, the COVID-19 pandemic, and economic crisis have dramatically increased protection risks for children across Syria.⁶⁹⁴ According to the Syria Humanitarian Needs Overview for 2021, approximately 45 percent of Syria's population are children.⁶⁹⁵ COVID-19-related restrictions on mobility and the devastating erosion of livelihoods over the past year have resulted in increased reliance on negative coping mechanisms, such as withdrawing children from school for work and early and forced marriage.⁶⁹⁶

Traditional spaces of respite for children, such as schools and other recreational facilities, have been made off-limits by the pandemic. USAID reported that according to Save the Children, the percentage of children out of school in northern Syria increased from 34 to 67 percent due to COVID-19-related restrictions on group gatherings and the growing level of poverty.⁶⁹⁷

The consequences of the pandemic for children may be felt most acutely in camps. Displacement camps, enclosed spaces that are often overcrowded and lacking adequate sanitation and hygiene infrastructure, are particularly at risk of high COVID-19 transmission. As a precautionary measure, group-based and in-person camp services have been subject to routine suspension—disproportionately impacting partners implementing protection programs. USAID BHA reported that it is currently funding six implementing partners to maintain spaces for traumatized children residing in formal and informal camp settings across northern Syria. Supported activities within these child-friendly spaces include the facilitation of visual and performance art therapy sessions, informal learning activities, and life-skills training.⁶⁹⁸

Outside of the formal camp setting, the DoS education program has supported the rehabilitation of schools' water, sanitation, and hygiene facilities in partnership with six community-based organizations. Since inception, this program has served an estimated 314,032 students in more than 773 schools and rehabilitated more than 104 school facilities across northeast Syria, the DoS reported.⁶⁹⁹ Additionally, the DoS program has provided critical psychosocial support to 62,304 children in formal schools and informal displaced persons camps. In an effort to curb the increased need in the next quarter, this program will continue to rehabilitate school water and sanitation facilities in the following locations: 50 schools in Dayr az Zawr, 10 in Raqqah, 17 in Tabqa, and 10 in Hasakah. According to education committees' enrollment data, these upcoming rehabilitation activities will benefit an additional 61,571 students.⁷⁰⁰

USAID reported that while its child protection partners continue to search for meaningful ways to build and maintain safe spaces for children amid the pandemic, limitations on group activities and the intensification of child protection risks make this endeavor challenging. USAID BHA reported that it remains committed to ensuring that these partners can respond to needs, despite these challenging circumstances.⁷⁰¹

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A U.S. Air Force Airman performs preflight checks on a KC-135 Stratotanker. (U.S. Air Force photo)

OVERSIGHT ACTIVITIES

- 90 Strategic Planning
- 92 Audit, Inspection,
and Evaluation Activity
- 99 Investigations
and Hotline Activity

OVERSIGHT ACTIVITIES

This section of the report provides information on Lead IG and partner agencies' strategic planning efforts; completed, ongoing, and planned Lead IG and partner agencies' oversight work related to audits, inspections, and evaluations; Lead IG investigations; and hotline activities from April 1 through June 30, 2021.

STRATEGIC PLANNING

Pursuant to Section 8L of the Inspector General Act, the Lead IG develops and implements a joint strategic plan to guide comprehensive oversight of programs and operations for each overseas contingency operation. This effort includes reviewing and analyzing completed oversight, management, and other relevant reports to identify systemic problems, trends, lessons learned, and best practices to inform future oversight projects. The Lead IG agencies issue an annual joint strategic oversight plan for each operation.

FY 2021 Joint Strategic Oversight Plan Activities

In 2014, upon designation of the DoD IG as the Lead IG for Operation Inherent Resolve (OIR), the three Lead IG agencies developed and implemented a joint strategic oversight plan for comprehensive oversight of OIR. The three Lead IG agencies update the oversight plan annually.

The FY 2021 Joint Strategic Oversight Plan for OIR, effective October 1, 2020, organized OIR-related oversight projects into three strategic oversight areas: 1) Military Operations and Security Cooperation; 2) Governance, Humanitarian Assistance, and Development; and 3) Support to Mission. The *FY 2021 Comprehensive Oversight Plan for Overseas Contingency Operations* included the Joint Strategic Oversight Plan for OIR.

The Overseas Contingency Operations Joint Planning Group serves as a primary venue to coordinate audits, inspections, and evaluations of U.S. Government-funded activities supporting overseas contingency operations, including those relating to the Middle East.

The Overseas Contingency Operations Joint Planning Group meets quarterly to provide a forum for coordination of the broader Federal oversight community, including the military service IGs and audit agencies, the Government Accountability Office, and the OIGs of the Departments of Justice, Treasury, Energy, and Homeland Security.

In May 2021, the Joint Planning Group held its 54th meeting, carried out virtually to accommodate participants because of coronavirus disease–2019 (COVID-19) precautions. Guest speaker Peter Velz, director of Afghanistan, Resource Policy and Requirements, for the Office of the Under Secretary of Defense (Policy), discussed the planning efforts and challenges for the U.S. withdrawal from Afghanistan.



**FY 2021
Comprehensive
Oversight Plan
for Overseas
Contingency
Operations**

Lead IG Strategic Oversight Areas

MILITARY OPERATIONS AND SECURITY COOPERATION

Military Operations and Security Cooperation focuses on determining the degree to which the contingency operation is accomplishing its security mission. Activities that fall under this strategic oversight area include:

- Conducting unilateral and partnered counterterrorism operations
- Providing security assistance
- Training and equipping partner security forces
- Advising, assisting, and enabling partner security forces
- Advising and assisting ministry-level security officials

GOVERNANCE, HUMANITARIAN ASSISTANCE, AND DEVELOPMENT

Governance, Humanitarian Assistance, and Development focuses on some of the root causes of violent extremism. Activities that fall under this strategic oversight area include:

- Countering and reducing corruption, social inequality, and extremism
- Promoting inclusive and effective democracy, civil participation, and empowerment of women
- Promoting reconciliation, peaceful conflict resolution, demobilization and reintegration of armed forces, and other rule of law efforts
- Providing food, water, medical care, emergency relief, and shelter to people affected by crisis
- Assisting and protecting internally displaced persons and refugees
- Building or enhancing host-nation governance capacity
- Supporting sustainable and appropriate recovery and reconstruction activities, repairing infrastructure, removing explosive remnants of war, and reestablishing utilities and other public services
- Countering trafficking in persons and preventing sexual exploitation and abuse

SUPPORT TO MISSION

Support to Mission focuses on U.S. administrative, logistical, and management efforts that enable military operations and non-military programs. Activities that fall under this strategic oversight area include:

- Ensuring the security of U.S. Government personnel and property
- Providing for the occupational health and safety of personnel
- Administering U.S. Government programs
- Managing U.S. Government grants and contracts
- Inventorying and accounting for equipment.

AUDIT, INSPECTION, AND EVALUATION ACTIVITY

The Lead IG agencies use dedicated, rotational, and temporary employees, as well as contractors, to conduct oversight projects, investigate fraud and corruption, and provide consolidated planning and reporting on the status of overseas contingency operations.

The COVID-19 global pandemic continued to affect the Lead IG agencies' ability to conduct oversight of projects related to overseas contingency operations. In response to travel restrictions, the Lead IG agencies either delayed or deferred some oversight projects or revised or narrowed the scope of ongoing work. The Lead IG agencies continued to conduct oversight work while teleworking and practicing social distancing.

Prior to the pandemic, oversight staff from the Lead IG agencies stationed in field offices in Afghanistan, Qatar, Iraq, Egypt, and Germany, as well as from the United States, would travel to locations in the region to conduct fieldwork for their projects.

Based on DoD Force Health Protection Guidance, the DoD OIG will determine when to re-initiate travel to overseas locations and augment overseas offices on a case-by-case basis. DoD OIG oversight and investigative staff maintained their presence in Kuwait, Qatar, and Bahrain during the quarter. While the ordered departure that has been in place since March 2020 continued during the quarter, all three of the DoS OIG staff assigned to the U.S. Embassy in Baghdad were allowed to return to Iraq and did so during the quarter. DoS OIG staff stationed in Frankfurt, Germany, primarily worked from home rather than their offices in the consulate.

The Lead IG agencies and their partner agencies completed 10 reports related to OIR during the quarter. These reports examined various activities that support OIR, including the effectiveness of U.S. Central Command's (USCENTCOM) target development and post-strike civilian casualty assessment activities, and combatant commands' counter threat finance activities; DoS processes to identify and nominate qualified contract oversight personnel in Iraq; DoS Bureau of Overseas Buildings Operations fire protection processes for DoS facilities; DoS Public Diplomacy Staffing Initiative; and USAID processes to prevent, detect and respond to sexual exploitation and abuse allegations.

As of June 30, 2021, 17 projects related to OIR were ongoing and 9 projects related to OIR were planned.

Final Reports by Lead IG Agencies

DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE OFFICE OF INSPECTOR GENERAL

Evaluation of Kinetic Targeting and Civilian Casualty Reporting in the USCENTCOM Area of Responsibility

DoDIG -2021-084; May 18, 2021

The DoD OIG conducted this evaluation to determine the effectiveness of USCENTCOM's target development and prosecution processes, as well as post-strike collateral damage and civilian casualty assessment activities. The report is classified.

Evaluation of Combatant Command Counter Threat Finance Activities

DoDIG-2021-082; May 18, 2021

The DoD OIG conducted this evaluation to determine whether U.S. Africa Command, USCENTCOM, U.S. European Command, and U.S. Indo-Pacific Command are planning and executing counter threat finance activities to impact adversaries' ability to use financial networks to negatively affect U.S. interests. The report is classified.

DEPARTMENT OF STATE OFFICE OF INSPECTOR GENERAL

Inspection of the Bureau of Overseas Buildings Operations' Office of Fire Protection

ISP-I-21-22; May 19, 2021

The DoS OIG conducted this inspection to evaluate whether the DoS, Bureau of Overseas Buildings Operations, Directorate of Operations, Office of Fire Protection (OBO/FIRE) effectively directs and monitors overseas posts' compliance with the DoS fire protection program; and 2) review the Office of Fire Protection's inspection, safety, and prevention programs. OBO/FIRE manages and directs the fire protection program for the DoS's overseas posts and residences, including the U.S. Embassy in Kabul, and the U.S. Embassy in Baghdad.

The DoS OIG found that while OBO/FIRE generally carried out its mission to prevent fire-related fatalities and injuries, OBO/FIRE reported that there had been three fatalities and five injuries in DoS-managed facilities overseas from FY 2006 to FY 2020. The DoS OIG found that limitations in a Bureau of Overseas Buildings Operations database impeded OBO/FIRE's ability to fully monitor overseas posts' compliance with the requirements of its high-rise building mitigation program.

The DoS OIG made eight recommendations in this report, all to the Bureau of Overseas Buildings Operations. The Bureau of Overseas Buildings Operations concurred with all eight recommendations and the DoS OIG considered each recommendation resolved pending further action at the time the report was issued.

Inspection of the Bureau of Overseas Buildings Operations' Office of Safety, Health, and Environmental Management

ISP-I-21-21; April 22, 2021

The DoS OIG conducted this inspection to determine whether the Office of Safety, Health, and Environmental Management (OBO/SHEM) effectively manages overseas posts' compliance with DoS safety, occupational health, and environmental management requirements; and 2) review the Office of Safety, Health, and Environmental Management's workplace, residential, and motor vehicle safety programs. OBO/SHEM oversees and directs the DoS's program to promote safe and healthy living and working conditions for DoS employees located at overseas posts and residences. Among other things, OBO/SHEM's safety program covers the more than 2,400 residences on the compound at the U.S. Embassy in Kabul, and the nearly 1,500 residences on the compound at U.S. Embassy in Baghdad.

The DoS OIG found that while OBO/SHEM had made progress in reducing safety risks to DoS employees and family members, from 2014 to 2020, OBO/SHEM reported 6,214 accidents that resulted in 65 fatalities, 442 hospitalizations, 27,983 lost workdays, and \$26.1 million in property damage. Moreover, the DoS OIG found that 93 percent of the DoS's nearly 300 overseas posts had not fully completed or entered a safety certification for all residences in OBO/SHEM's database, as required. For the U.S. Embassy in Baghdad, of the 1,499 residences, 1,494 residential certificates (99.7 percent) were not current. For the U.S. Embassy in Kabul, residential certificates for all 2,412 residences were expired.

The DoS OIG made 11 recommendations in this report, all to the Bureau of Overseas Buildings Operations. The Bureau of Overseas Buildings Operations concurred with 10 recommendations and neither agreed nor disagreed with the remaining recommendation. The DoS OIG considered all 11 recommendations resolved pending further action at the time the report was issued.

Review of the Public Diplomacy Staffing Initiative

ISP-I-21-24; April 20, 2021

The DoS OIG conducted this inspection of the Public Diplomacy Staffing Initiative to assess program leadership; survey public diplomacy officers to assess the clarity, progress, and results of the program in the field; and to review coordination and communication among stakeholders.

The DoS, Office of the Under Secretary for Public Diplomacy and Public Affairs, Office of Policy, Planning, and Resources (R/PPR) launched the Public Diplomacy Staffing Initiative (PDSI) in 2014 to update the position descriptions for the approximately 2,600 locally employed staff positions in the public diplomacy sections of the DoS's 186 overseas missions, including the U.S. missions to Iraq and Afghanistan. Many of the position descriptions for the relevant employees had not been significantly updated since the 1970s. Public diplomacy is the function of advancing U.S. national interests by seeking to engage, understand, and inform the perspectives of foreign audiences. As of October 2020, 36 of the DoS's 186 overseas missions (19 percent) had fully implemented the PDSI.

The DoS OIG found that while R/PPR made efforts to modify procedures and implement lessons learned from the first few years of PDSI implementation, deficiencies in 1) senior leadership involvement, 2) project management, 3) resource planning, 4) communication between R/PPR and stakeholders, and 5) training continued to hamper the implementation of the PDSI.

The DoS OIG made six recommendations in this report, all to R/PPR. R/PPR concurred with all six recommendations and the DoS OIG considered each recommendation resolved pending further action at the time the report was issued.

Compliance Follow-Up Audit of the Bureau of Near Eastern Affairs Selection and Management of Contract Oversight Personnel in Iraq

AUD-MERO-21-24; April 13, 2021

The DoS OIG conducted this audit to determine the extent to which the DoS has taken action to close the four open recommendations that are considered resolved pending further action

that the DoS OIG made in an earlier audit report (AUD-MERO-19-10) to improve the process to identify and nominate qualified contract oversight personnel in Iraq.

In November 2018, the DoS OIG reported that the DoS Bureau of Near Eastern Affairs did not nominate qualified contracting officer's representatives (COR) and government technical monitors to oversee mission support contracts in Iraq valued at more than \$3 billion. In this compliance follow-up audit, the DoS OIG sought to determine the extent to which the DoS acted to close the four open recommendations from the November 2018 report. Three of the four open recommendations were made to the Bureau of Near Eastern Affairs. The fourth open recommendation was made to the DoS, Bureau of Administration, Office of the Procurement Executive.

The DoS OIG found that the Bureau of Near Eastern Affairs had not taken all necessary steps to implement the three open recommendations and that the Office of the Procurement Executive had taken some but not all steps needed to address the one open recommendation. While the Bureau of Near Eastern Affairs had determined that a Level III Federal Acquisition Certification for Contracting Officer's Representative certification was required to oversee contracts in Iraq, it had not established the level of technical expertise needed. Furthermore, the Bureau of Near Eastern Affairs continued to nominate CORs and government technical monitors who were neither Level III certified nor demonstrated technical expertise in the contract subject matter. With respect to the recommendation directed to the Office of the Procurement Executive, the DoS OIG found that the Office of the Procurement Executive had explored ways to create a roster of qualified CORs and had studied developing a new skill code and specialized incentive program for CORs, but had not researched the inclusion of the COR workforce into the DoS's strategic human capital plan with the goal of addressing the COR workforce shortfalls.

The DoS OIG made four new recommendations, two to the Bureau of Near Eastern Affairs, one to the Office of the Procurement Executive, and one to the Under Secretary of State for Management as the Procurement Executive's supervisor. The relevant offices concurred or partially concurred with the recommendations and the DoS OIG considered all four recommendations resolved pending further action at the time the report was issued.

U.S. AGENCY FOR INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT OFFICE OF INSPECTOR GENERAL

Independent Audit Report on International Business & Technical Consultants Inc.'s Costs Incurred and Billed, Task Order AID-267-TO-17-0001, Performance Management and Support Program in Iraq, June 1, 2018, to September 30, 2019

8-267-21-002-D; June 28, 2021

The USAID Mission in Iraq contracted an audit to examine International Business and Technical Consultants Inc.'s public vouchers to determine whether direct costs billed under the USAID task order, AID-267-TO-17-0001, Performance Management and Support program in Iraq were allowable, allocable, and reasonable in accordance with the Federal Acquisition Regulations, USAID Acquisition Regulations, Department of State Standardized Regulations, and contract terms. The audit covered \$3,910,510 during the period from June 1, 2018, to September 30, 2019. The audit identified \$20,337 of questioned costs, and two

material instances of noncompliance. Since the questioned costs did not meet the OIG's established threshold of \$25,000 for making a recommendation, USAID did not make a recommendation related to the questioned costs. Nevertheless, USAID OIG suggested that the USAID Mission in Iraq recover any amount determined to be unallowable. USAID OIG recommended that the USAID Mission in Iraq verify that International Business & Technical Consultants Inc. corrects the two instances of material noncompliance.

Financial Audit of Oxfam GB Under Multiple USAID Agreements for the Year Ended March 31, 2019

3-000-21-019-R; June 1, 2021

Oxfam GB contracted an audit of multiple USAID agreements to determine whether fund accountability statements were presented fairly, in all material respects; 2) to evaluate Oxfam GB's internal controls; and 3) to determine whether Oxfam GB complied with award terms and applicable laws and regulations. The audit covered \$10,442,288, of expenditures, of which \$9,969,071, were USAID audited expenditures for the year ended March 31, 2019. Oxfam GB expenditures of U.S. Government financial assistance included awards in Iraq. The audit determined that accountability statements presented fairly costs incurred and reimbursed by USAID, the DoS, and other agencies for the year ended March 31, 2019. The audit did not identify any material weaknesses or significant deficiencies in internal control. The audit disclosed no instances of noncompliance and did not question any costs.

USAID Should Implement Additional Controls to Prevent and Respond to Sexual Exploitation and Abuse of Beneficiaries

9-000-21-006-P; May 12, 2021

USAID OIG conducted this audit to determine the extent to which USAID has taken action to prevent and detect sexual exploitation and abuse; and the effectiveness of USAID's process for responding to allegations of sexual exploitation and abuse.

Sexual exploitation and abuse has been a longstanding problem in the foreign aid sector given the inherent power disparity between aid workers and beneficiaries. After recent sexual abuse scandals in the international development sector came to light in February 2018, USAID began to ensure that sufficient safeguards are in place to protect beneficiaries from sexual exploitation and abuse committed by employees of implementers receiving USAID funding. USAID's efforts to address sexual exploitation and abuse are to be applied in countries receiving USAID assistance, including Iraq and Syria.

USAID OIG determined that USAID had established a zero-tolerance stance on sexual exploitation and abuse and an intra-Agency alliance focused on sexual misconduct. The Agency also strengthened policies and identified process improvements to address sexual exploitation and abuse. However, there were gaps in USAID's approach for preventing sexual exploitation and abuse in Agency award and monitoring processes. USAID did not require key pre-award sexual exploitation and abuse measures across all awards, which led to variances across acquisition and assistance awards as well as humanitarian and development assistance. Additionally, USAID did not monitor implementers' efforts to prevent sexual exploitation and abuse, as the Agency did not have requirements and guidance in place to enable staff to continuously monitor the design and effectiveness of

implementers' sexual exploitation and abuse prevention measures. USAID also lacked clearly defined roles and responsibilities and a centralized tracking mechanism for responding to and managing sexual exploitation and abuse allegations. USAID OIG made nine recommendations to improve the Agency's controls to prevent and respond to sexual exploitation and abuse of beneficiaries. Based on information provided to USAID OIG in response to the draft report, all recommendations were considered resolved but open, pending completion of planned activities.

Examination of Pragma Corporation's Indirect Cost Rate Proposals and Related Books and Records for Reimbursement for the Fiscal Years Ended December 31, 2015 and 2016

3-000-21-035-I; April 16, 2021

The USAID Office of Acquisition and Assistance, Cost, Audit and Support Division contracted an audit to examine Pragma Corporation's contracts and subcontracts for the fiscal years ended December 31, 2015 and 2016. Pragma Corporation's expenditures of U.S. Government financial assistance included awards in Iraq. The audit examined USAID incurred costs of \$21,714,629 for the two years ended December 31, 2015 and 2016. The audit did not disclose questioned costs or any findings that are required to be reported under government auditing standards.

Ongoing Oversight Activities

As of June 30, 2021, the Lead IG agencies and their partner agencies had 17 ongoing projects related to OIR. Figure 8 describes the ongoing projects by strategic oversight area.

Tables 6 and 7, contained in Appendix E, list the title and objective for each of these projects. Appendix E also identifies ongoing projects that the DoD OIG suspended due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Those projects will restart when the DoD OIG resumes normal operations.

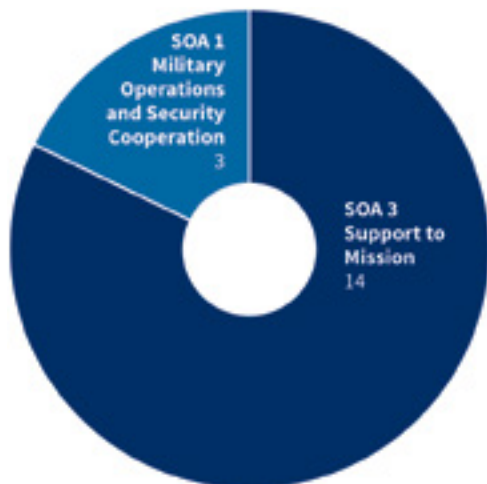
The following sections highlight some of these ongoing projects by strategic oversight area.

MILITARY OPERATIONS AND SECURITY COOPERATION

- The **DoD OIG** is conducting an audit to determine whether the Military Services effectively conducted pre-deployment training to counter an adversary's use of unmanned aircraft systems.
- The **DoD OIG** is conducting an evaluation to determine whether USCENTCOM properly screened, documented, and tracked DoD Service members suspected of sustaining a traumatic brain injury to determine whether a return to duty status for current operations was acceptable or evacuation and additional care was required.

Figure 8.

Ongoing Projects by Strategic Oversight Area



SUPPORT TO MISSION

- The **DoD OIG** is conducting an audit to determine whether the deployment process resulted in accurate and timely entitlements and allowances for deployed members of the Military Service Reserves.
- The **DoD OIG** is conducting a follow up evaluation to determine whether corrective actions were taken as identified in the 2019 “Evaluation of DoD Efforts to Combat Trafficking in Persons in Kuwait.”
- The **DoS OIG** is conducting an audit to determine whether the DoS followed acquisition policy in awarding non-competitive contracts in support of overseas contingency operations in Afghanistan and Iraq.

Planned Oversight Projects

As of June 30, 2021, the Lead IG agencies and their partner agencies had nine planned projects related to OIR. Figure 9 describes the planned projects by strategic oversight area.

Tables 8 and 9, contained in Appendix F, list the titles and objectives for each of these projects. The following sections highlight some of these planned projects by strategic oversight area.

MILITARY OPERATIONS AND SECURITY COOPERATION

- The **DoD OIG** intends to conduct an audit to determine whether the DoD is implementing effective oversight, controls, and processes to mitigate cybersecurity risks to unmanned systems.
- The **DoD OIG** intends to conduct an evaluation to determine whether determine whether the National Geospatial-Intelligence Agency is collecting, analyzing, and distributing geospatial intelligence in support of Combatant Commands’ intelligence requirements.

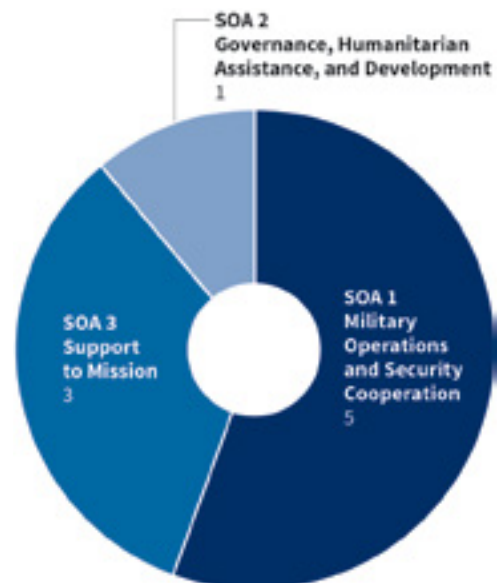
GOVERNANCE, HUMANITARIAN ASSISTANCE, AND DEVELOPMENT

- **USAID OIG** intends to conduct an audit to determine if USAID is managing risks inherent to providing humanitarian and stabilization assistance and determine the extent to which USAID’s internally displaced persons activities support the joint DoS/USAID strategic plan objectives.

SUPPORT TO MISSION

- The **DoD OIG** intends to conduct an audit to determine whether the Army is meeting mission goals associated with implementing a program to modernize equipment sets in the USCENTCOM area of responsibility, to include Kuwait in support of OIR.

Figure 9.
Planned Projects by Strategic Oversight Area



- The **DoS OIG** intends to conduct an audit to determine whether the DoS considered existing and future electrical power needs and infrastructure of the U.S. Embassy in Baghdad when designing the new power plant, conducted oversight of the construction and commissioning of the new power plant, and took measures to mitigate design or construction deficiencies, if any.

INVESTIGATIONS AND HOTLINE ACTIVITY

Investigations

The investigative components of the Lead IG agencies and their partner agencies continued to conduct investigative activity related to OIR during the quarter. However, due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the Lead IG agencies consolidated resources and temporarily closed offices in Iraq. The Defense Criminal Investigative Service (DCIS, the DoD OIG's criminal investigative component) maintained investigative personnel in Bahrain, Kuwait, and Qatar, where they are working cases related to OIR. DCIS agents also worked on OIR-related cases from offices in the United States. DoS OIG and USAID OIG investigators have returned investigative personnel to Washington, D.C., where they have been working on cases related to OIR.

INVESTIGATIVE ACTIVITY RELATED TO OIR

During this quarter, Lead IG investigations resulted in one sentencing based on a USAID OIG investigation. The case is discussed below.

The investigative branches of the Lead IG agencies and their partner agencies closed 17 investigations, initiated 2 new investigations, and coordinated on 81 open investigations. The open investigations involve grant and procurement fraud, corruption, theft, program irregularities, computer intrusions, and human trafficking allegations.

The Lead IG agencies and partners continue to coordinate their investigative efforts through the Fraud and Corruption Investigative Working Group, which consists of representatives from DCIS, the DoS OIG, USAID OIG, the U.S. Army Criminal Investigation Command, the Naval Criminal Investigative Service, and the Air Force Office of Special Investigations. This quarter, the Fraud and Corruption Investigative Working Group conducted 35 fraud awareness briefings for 502 participants.

The Dashboard on page 100 depicts activities of the Fraud and Corruption Investigative Working Group.

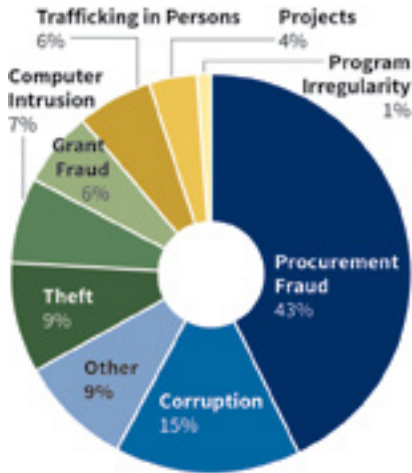
FORMER NGO PROCUREMENT OFFICIAL SENTENCED TO PRISON FOR BRIBERY

On May 23, a former NGO official was sentenced to 40 months in prison for paying bribes to NGO officers in exchange for sensitive procurement information related to NGO contracts funded in part by USAID.

According to the USAID OIG investigation, from January 2011 through December 2016, Ernest Halilov, 43, a citizen of Turkmenistan, coordinated a bid-rigging scheme involving USAID contracts to NGOs. USAID awarded the contracts to NGOs to procure food and supplies that would ultimately be provided to those affected by various humanitarian crises,

ACTIVITY BY FRAUD AND CORRUPTION INVESTIGATIVE WORKING GROUP

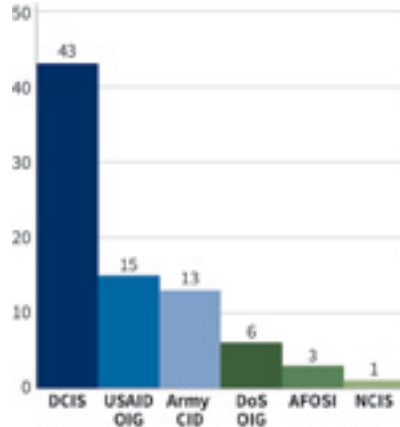
OPERATION INHERENT RESOLVE
As of June 30, 2021



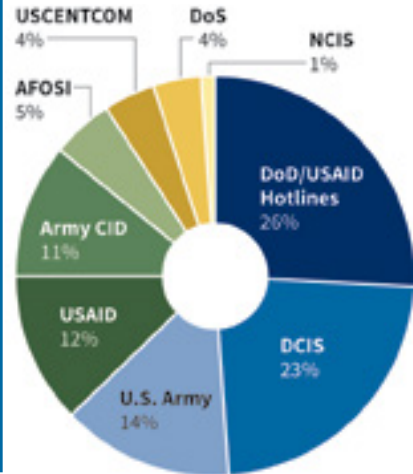
OPEN INVESTIGATIONS*

81

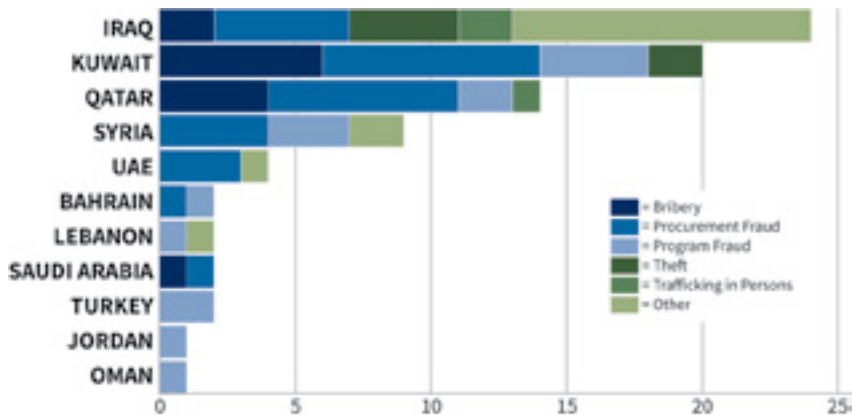
OPEN INVESTIGATIONS BY WORKING GROUP MEMBER*



SOURCES OF ALLEGATIONS



PRIMARY OFFENSE LOCATIONS



Q3 FY 2021 BRIEFINGS

Briefings Held	35
Briefing Attendees	502

Q3 FY 2021 RESULTS

Arrests	—
Criminal Charges	—
Criminal Convictions	1
Fines/Recoveries	—
Debarments	—
Contract Terminations	—
Personnel Actions	—
Administrative Actions	—
Forfeitures	—

*Some investigations are joint with more than one agency and some not joint with any other agency. Therefore, the total number of Joint Open Cases may not equal the total number of Open Cases. Open Cases as of 6/30/2021.

including refugees displaced by the conflict in Syria. Specifically, Halilov bribed two NGO officers to obtain confidential procurement information, to include bid evaluation information, contract specifications, and internal vendor rankings. In turn, Halilov provided the confidential information to his preferred companies in exchange for kickbacks, which provided the companies with a competitive advantage and increased the likelihood they would win NGO-procured contracts. Halilov also admitted that he instructed a witness to lie to law enforcement agents and destroy emails related to the investigation.

INVESTIGATIVE ACTIVITY RELATED TO LEGACY CASES

The Lead IG agencies and their partner agencies have six ongoing “legacy” investigations related to crimes involving the OIR area of operations that occurred prior to the designation of OIR.

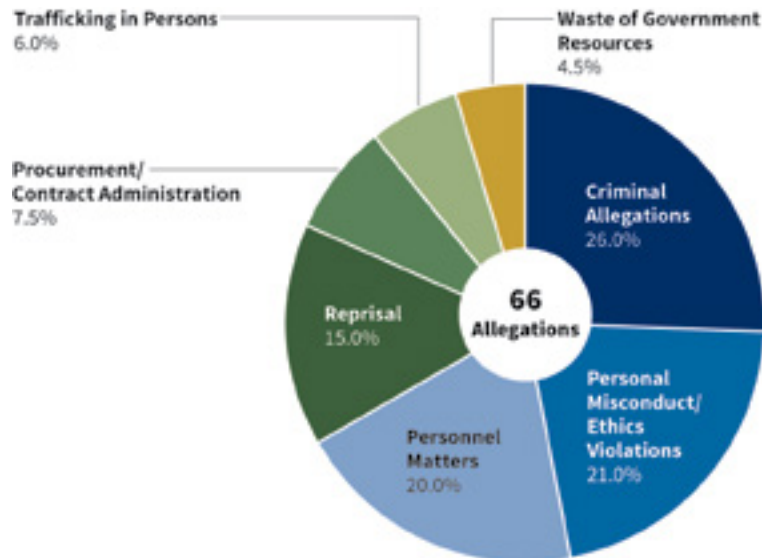
Hotline

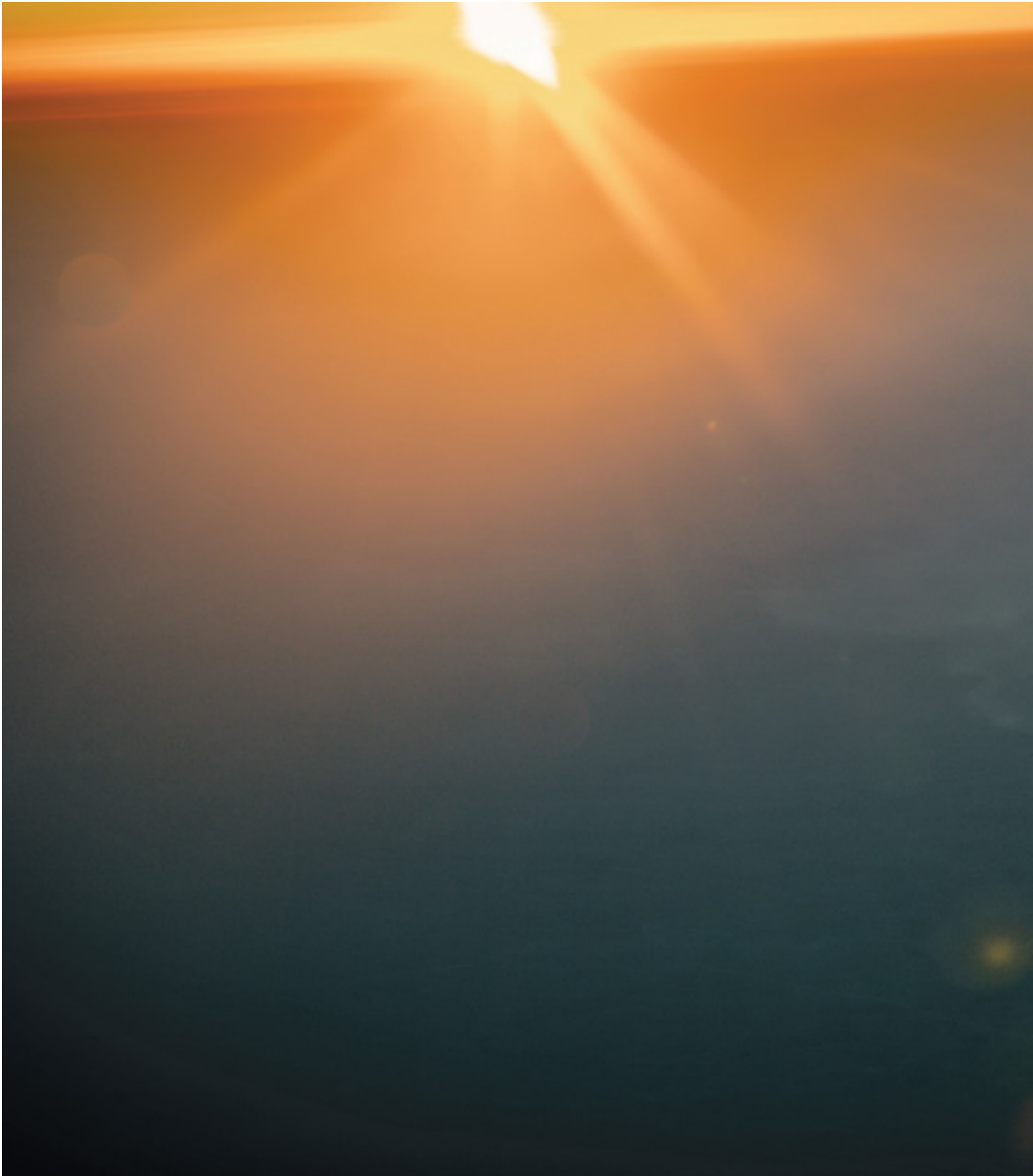
Each Lead IG agency maintains its own hotline to receive complaints specific to its agency. The hotlines provide a confidential, reliable means for individuals to report violations of law, rule, or regulation; mismanagement; gross waste of funds; or abuse of authority. A DoD OIG Hotline investigator coordinates among the Lead IG agencies and others, as appropriate. During the quarter, the DoD OIG hotline investigator received 66 allegations and referred 51 cases to Lead IG agencies and other investigative organizations. In some instances, it is possible for multiple cases to be referred to different Lead IG and other investigative agencies for the same allegations.


As noted in Figure 10, the majority of the allegations during the reporting period were related to criminal allegations, personal misconduct, personnel matters, and reprisal.

Figure 10.

Hotline Activities







A U.S. Air Force F-16 Fighting Falcon aircraft flies at sunrise during a mission supporting CJTF-OIR. (U.S. Air Force photo)

APPENDICES

- 104 Appendix A:
Classified Appendix to this Report
- 104 Appendix B: Methodology for
Preparing this Lead IG Quarterly
Report
- 105 Appendix C: Department of Justice
Prosecutions and Activities Against
Terrorism
- 107 Appendix D: Department of the
Treasury and Department of State
Actions Against Terrorist Financing
- 109 Appendix E: Ongoing Oversight
Projects
- 111 Appendix F: Planned Oversight
Projects
- 113 Acronyms
- 115 Map of Iraq
- 116 Map of Syria
- 117 Endnotes

APPENDIX A

Classified Appendix to this Report

A classified appendix to this report provides additional information on Operation Inherent Resolve, as noted in several sections of this report. The appendix will be delivered to relevant agencies and congressional committees. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the DoS and USAID OIGs did not provide information for or participate in the preparation of the classified appendix.

APPENDIX B

Methodology for Preparing this Lead IG Quarterly Report

This report complies with section 8L of the Inspector General Act of 1978, which requires that the designated Lead IG provide a quarterly report, available to the public, on each overseas contingency operation, and is consistent with the requirement that a biannual report be published by the Lead IG on the activities of the Inspectors General with respect to that overseas contingency operation. The Chair of the Council of Inspectors General for Integrity and Efficiency designated the DoD IG as the Lead IG for Operation Inherent Resolve. The DoS IG is the Associate IG for the operation.

This report covers the period from April 1, 2021, through June 30, 2021. The three Lead IG agencies—DoD OIG, DoS OIG, and USAID OIG—and partner oversight agencies contributed the content of this report.

To fulfill the congressional mandate to report on OIR, the Lead IG agencies gather data and information from Federal agencies and open sources. The sources of information contained in this report are listed in endnotes or notes to tables and figures. Except in the case audits, inspections, investigations, and evaluations referenced in this report, the Lead IG agencies have not verified or audited the information collected through open-source research or from Federal agencies, and the information provided represents the view of the source cited in each instance.

INFORMATION COLLECTION FROM AGENCIES AND OPEN SOURCES

Each quarter, the Lead IG agencies gather information from the DoD, DoS, USAID, and other Federal agencies about their programs and operations related to OIR. The Lead IG agencies use the information provided by their respective agencies for quarterly reporting and oversight planning.

This report also draws on current, publicly available information from reputable sources. Sources used in this report may include the following:

- U.S. Government statements, press conferences, and reports
- Reports issued by international organizations, nongovernmental organizations, and think tanks
- Media reports

The Lead IG agencies use open-source information to assess information obtained through their agency information collection process and provide additional detail about the operation.

REPORT PRODUCTION

The DoD IG, as the Lead IG for this operation, is responsible for assembling and producing this report. The DoD OIG, the DoS OIG, and USAID OIG draft the sections of the report related to the activities of their agencies and then participate in the editing of the entire report. Once the report is assembled, each OIG

coordinates a two-phase review process within its own agency. During the first review, the Lead IG agencies ask relevant offices within their agencies to comment, correct inaccuracies, and provide additional documentation. The Lead IG agencies incorporate agency comments, where appropriate, and send the report back to the agencies for a second review prior to publication. The final report reflects the editorial view of the DoD OIG, the DoS OIG, and USAID OIG as independent oversight agencies.

APPENDIX C

Department of Justice Prosecutions and Activities Against Terrorism

Since 2014, the Department of Justice (DoJ) has charged more than 205 individuals with international terrorism-related conduct relating to ISIS. Since 2014, the DoJ has obtained more than 155 convictions; the remaining cases remain open. A portion of the aforementioned cases involve individuals who could be described as foreign terrorist fighters or homegrown violent extremists linked to ISIS, as well as those who may have assisted their conduct, obstructed investigations, or otherwise involved an identified link to ISIS.

The following examples include details on indictments, convictions, or sentences related to foreign terrorist fighters and homegrown violent extremists related to ISIS activity from April 1 through June 30, 2021:

- **On April 9, 2021, in the Northern District of Illinois, Edward Schimenti** was sentenced to 162 months in prison for conspiring to provide material support to ISIS. Schimenti was convicted by a federal jury in 2019 on one count of conspiring to provide material support and resources to ISIS, and one count of making false statements to the FBI. According to court documents, Schimenti advocated on social media for violent extremism in support of the terrorist group. In 2015, Schimenti began meeting with undercover FBI employees and individuals who, unbeknownst to Schimenti, were cooperating with law enforcement. During the meetings, Schimenti discussed his devotion to ISIS and his commitment to ISIS principles. In 2017, Schimenti furnished cellular phones to one of the cooperating individuals, believing the phones would be used to detonate explosive devices in ISIS attacks overseas. On April 7, 2017, Schimenti drove with the cooperating individual to O'Hare International Airport in Chicago, with the understanding that the cooperating individual would be traveling to Syria to fight with ISIS.
- **On April 22, 2021, in the Southern District of New York, Akayed Ullah** was sentenced to life in prison for carrying out a bomb attack in New York City that he admitted he did on behalf of ISIS. Ullah was convicted by a federal jury of offenses related to the detonation and attempted detonation of a bomb in a subway station near the New York Port Authority Bus Terminal in New York City on December 11, 2017. According to court documents, on December 11, 2017, at approximately 7:20 a.m., Ullah detonated a pipe bomb strapped to his chest in a subway station near the Port Authority Bus Terminal in midtown Manhattan. Shortly after the blast, first responders located Ullah lying on the ground in the station where he had detonated the improvised explosive device, and he was taken into custody. Surveillance footage captured Ullah walking through the station immediately prior to the explosion and then detonating the bomb.
- **On April 23, 2021, in the Eastern District of New York, Elvis Redzepagic** pled guilty to attempting to provide material support and resources to ISIS and the al-Nusrah Front, both designated by the U.S. Department of State as foreign terrorist organizations. According to court documents, Redzepagic began communicating in early 2015 with an individual he believed to be both the commander of a battalion in Syria and a member of ISIS or the al-Nusrah Front, and made attempts to join that individual's battalion to engage in violent jihad. In July 2015, Redzepagic traveled to Turkey and made multiple unsuccessful attempts to cross the border into Syria. Unable to enter Syria from Turkey, Redzepagic traveled to Jordan in August 2016, but was stopped and deported by Jordanian authorities.

- **On May 12, 2021, in the Southern District of New York, Zachary Clark** was sentenced to 20 years in prison for attempting to provide material support to ISIS. Clark pled guilty in August 2020. According to court documents, Clark pledged allegiance to ISIS twice: first in July 2019 to ISIS's then-leader Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi, and then in October 2019 to ISIS's new leader, Abu Ibrahim al-Sashemi al-Qurayshi, whom ISIS promoted after al-Baghdadi's death. Beginning in at least March 2019, Clark disseminated ISIS propaganda through, among other avenues, encrypted chatrooms intended for members, associates, supporters, and potential recruits of ISIS. Clark's propaganda included, among other things, calls for ISIS supporters to commit lone wolf attacks in New York City. Clark urged participants in encrypted chatrooms to attack specific targets, posting maps and images of the New York City subway system and encouraging ISIS supporters to attack those locations. Clark's guidance also included posting a manual entitled "Make a bomb in the kitchen of your Mom," which was issued by al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula and included detailed instructions about constructing bombs using readily available materials.
- **On May 13, 2021, in the Middle District of Florida, Romeo Langhorne** pled guilty to attempting to provide material support and resources to ISIS. According to court documents, Langhorne pledged his allegiance to ISIS at some point in 2014. Throughout 2018 and 2019, Langhorne reaffirmed his support for ISIS on various social media accounts, as well as posted ISIS-produced videos to his YouTube account and participated in online chat rooms with like-minded individuals. In December 2018 and January 2019, Langhorne expressed in one of those chat rooms an interest in creating a video that would improve on existing videos demonstrating the making and use of a deadly explosive, triacetone triperoxide, also known as TATP. Langhorne informed an undercover employee that his true purpose in making and distributing the video was to arm ISIS adherents and others with knowledge of how to make TATP and use it for terrorism-related purposes in support of ISIS.
- **On May 18, 2021, in the Northern District of Ohio, Damon Michael Joseph** pled guilty to attempting to provide material support to ISIS, and attempting to commit a hate crime, for planning an attack on a synagogue in the Toledo, Ohio area. In 2018, Joseph drew the attention of law enforcement by posting photographs of weapons and various messages in support of ISIS on his social media accounts, as well as a photograph originally distributed by the media wing of ISIS. Beginning in September 2018, Joseph engaged in a series of online conversations with several undercover FBI agents where he repeatedly stated and affirmed his support for ISIS and produced propaganda he believed was to be used for ISIS recruitment efforts. Over the next few weeks, Joseph stated to an undercover agent that he wanted to participate in an attack on behalf of ISIS. Joseph forwarded a document to the agent that laid out his plans for such an attack on "Jews who support state of Israel." Joseph met with an undercover FBI agent and discussed conducting a mass shooting at a synagogue. Joseph identified two synagogues in the greater Toledo as potential targets and discussed the types of weapons he believed would inflict mass casualties. Joseph again met with an undercover agent to discuss his plans and specifically stated that he wanted to kill a rabbi and wrote the name and address of the synagogue where the attack was to occur and stated that he had conducted research to determine when the Jewish Sabbath was so that more people would be present.

In addition, 12 people have been transferred to the United States from Iraq and Syria to face federal criminal charges related to terrorism since 2014.

During the quarter, some DoJ programs designed to train Coalition partners in Iraq and Syria on law enforcement and domestic intelligence as part of counter-ISIS operations, remained on hold due to COVID-19 limitations. The DoJ's Office of the Deputy Attorney General, through its Rule of Law Office, maintained its Office of the Justice Attaché at the U.S. Embassy in Baghdad. The attorney's activities during the quarter included:

- Reviewing intelligence and available information to determine if criminal prosecutions can be brought against suspected foreign terrorist fighters and other terrorists, including those being detained in Syria by partner forces, in either U.S. or foreign courts;

- Analyzing foreign legal systems and assisting in assembling available information for use by international partners in foreign investigations and prosecutions; and
- Assisting both interagency and international partners at the platform in navigating complex legal issues associated with the use of intelligence in criminal investigations and court proceedings, and issues related to the admissibility of evidence (that is, relating to converting intelligence into evidence).

APPENDIX D

Department of the Treasury and Department of State Actions Against Terrorist Financing

Executive Order 13224, as amended, provides the Secretary of the Treasury and the Secretary of State global terrorism authorities that authorize the Department to target activities of extremist groups, including ISIS. The Department of the Treasury's Office of Terrorism and Financial Intelligence and its Office of Foreign Assets Control work to disrupt the ability of terrorist organizations to fund their operations. The DoS's Bureau of Counterterrorism leads DoS activities to counter terrorist finance and to designate Specially Designated Global Terrorists and Foreign Terrorist Organizations.

DEPARTMENT OF THE TREASURY DESIGNATIONS AND ACTIVITIES

Since 2014, the Secretary of the Treasury has designated a total of 99 individuals and entities providing support to ISIS pursuant to Executive Order 13224. The Secretary of the Treasury sanctioned one money service business and three money service operators during this quarter. The sanctioned entities are as follows:

- **Alaa Khanfurah (Khanfurah)** was sanctioned for materially assisting, sponsoring, or providing financial, material, or technological support for, or goods or services to or in support of, ISIS. Throughout 2019 and 2020, Khanfurah's Turkey based money service business transferred funds to ISIS members throughout Syria, in part through the direct financial ties Khanfurah maintained with ISIS financial facilitators. This included Khanfurah sending thousands of dollars to an ISIS financial facilitator, as well as indirect money transfers sent through individuals who worked for Khanfurah. In 2017 and 2019, Khanfurah served as a key intermediary in facilitating financial transfers between senior ISIS leaders.
- **The Al-Fay Company and Idris Ali Awad al-Fay (Idris al Fay)** were designated for materially assisting, sponsoring, or providing financial, material, or technological support for, or goods or services to or in support of, ISIS. Idris al Fay, who is currently in Iraqi custody, used the Turkey-based Al Fay Company to facilitate the global distribution of currency on behalf of ISIS. Al Fay Company was also used by Idris al Fay as an intermediary between foreign donors and ISIS, including ISIS members located in the al Hol internally displaced persons camp in northeastern Syria. Idris al-Fay previously held leadership positions in al Qaeda and ISIS as a judicial officer and emir.
- **Ibrahim Ali Awad al Fay (Ibrahim al Fay)** was designated for owning or controlling, directly or indirectly, the Al Fay Company. Ibrahim al Fay, Idris al Fay's brother, manages the Al Fay Company in Idris al Fay's absence. By appropriating funds from international sources through a network of currency exchanges and hawalas, Idris al Fay and Ibrahim al Fay were able to send funds to ISIS elements in Iraq and Syria.

No individuals or organizations sanctioned for providing support to ISIS were removed from the sanctions list during this reporting period.

The Department of the Treasury (Treasury) leverages its participation and influence to develop a shared understanding of the threat posed by ISIS, as well as to encourage countries to take action within their jurisdictions and in coordination with others to disrupt ISIS financing and facilitation.

Treasury also takes a leadership role in the Global Coalition to Defeat ISIS, serving as a co-lead of the Counter-ISIS Finance Group (CIFG) along with its counterparts from Italy and Saudi Arabia. In May, Treasury, along with its co-leads, hosted the 14th CIFG meeting, with over 50 member states, observers, and independent experts. Topics included ISIS financial activities across the globe and efforts to counter them. Participants focused on ISIS funds transfers to enable the release of its detained operatives and family members, ISIS supporters' abuse of the charitable sector and madrasa networks in South and Southeast Asia, and increased use of virtual currencies.

Treasury works with interagency and Coalition partners, including the Iraqi government, to prioritize identifying ISIS's financial reserves and financial leaders, disrupting its financial facilitation networks in Iraq, and designating ISIS facilitators, front companies, and fundraisers in Iraq, Syria, Turkey and elsewhere. Similar to last quarter, Treasury reported that ISIS continued to raise funds through extortion of oil smuggling networks in eastern Syria, kidnapping for ransom targeting civilian businesses and populations, looting, and possibly the operation of front companies. ISIS also continued to use networks of couriers to smuggle cash between Iraq and Syria. The group relied on money services businesses, including hawalas, to transfer funds between Iraq and Syria as well as internationally, often relying on logistical hubs in Turkey. ISIS probably has tens of millions of U.S. dollars available in cash reserves dispersed across the region, but Treasury did not speculate on the amount of money ISIS distributed during this quarter.

DEPARTMENT OF STATE DESIGNATIONS

This quarter the Department of State did not make any Specially Designated Global Terrorist designations that were relevant to OIR.



APPENDIX E

Ongoing Oversight Projects

Tables 6 and 7 list the title and objective for Lead IG and partner agencies' ongoing oversight projects related to OIR.

Table 6.

Ongoing Oversight Projects Related to OIR by Lead IG Agency, as of June 30, 2021

DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE OFFICE OF INSPECTOR GENERAL

Audit of Pre-Deployment Training on Counter Unmanned Aerial Systems

To determine whether the Military Services conducted pre-deployment training to counter an adversary's use of Unmanned Aerial Systems in accordance with the operational requirements of the geographic combatant commands.

* Suspended due to COVID-19. The project will restart when force health protection conditions permit.

Audit of the Cybersecurity of DoD Additive Manufacturing Systems

To determine whether DoD Components, to include those supporting OIR, are securing additive manufacturing systems and data to prevent unauthorized changes and ensure integrity of design data.

* Suspended due to COVID-19. The project will restart when force health protection conditions permit.

Audit of Entitlements and Allowances for Processing for Military Service Reserve Deployments

To determine whether the deployment process resulted in accurate and timely entitlements and allowances for deployed members of the Military Service Reserves.

Follow Up Audit of the U.S. Army's Management of the Heavy Lift VIII Contract to Meet Changing Middle East Mission

To determine whether the Army implemented corrective actions in response to six open recommendations in Report No. DODIG-2017-095, "U.S. Army's Management of the Heavy Lift 7 Commercial Transportation Contract Requirements in the Middle East," June 26, 2017. In addition, to determine whether the Army implemented the corrective actions before issuing the Heavy Lift VIII contract.

Evaluation of Traumatic Brain Injury Screening in the U.S. Central Command Area of Responsibility

To determine whether U.S. Central Command properly screened, documented, and tracked DoD Service members suspected of sustaining a traumatic brain injury to determine whether a return to duty status for current operations was acceptable, or evacuation and additional care was required.

Follow-Up Evaluation of Report No. DoDIG-2019-088, "Evaluation of DoD Efforts to Combat Trafficking in Persons in Kuwait," June 11, 2019

To determine whether the DoD implemented corrective actions for report recommendations in DODIG-2019-088, "Evaluation of DoD Efforts to Combat Trafficking in Persons in Kuwait," June 11, 2019.

Audit of DoD Implementation of the DoD Coronavirus Disease-2019 Vaccine Distribution Plan

To determine whether DoD officials effectively distributed and administered coronavirus disease-2019 vaccines to DoD's workforce in accordance with DoD guidance.

Audit of the Defense Logistics Agency Award and Management of Fuel Contracts in Areas of Contingency Operations

To determine whether Defense Logistics Agency (DLA) Energy personnel awarded and met requirements for fuel requirements, in areas of contingency operations, as required by federal and DoD guidance. In addition, we will determine whether the DLA has processes in place to ensure contractors are meeting contractual obligations and following anticorruption practices.

DEPARTMENT OF STATE OFFICE OF INSPECTOR GENERAL

Audit of Nonexpendable Personal Property at U.S. Embassy Baghdad, Iraq

To determine whether U.S. Embassy Baghdad has implemented internal controls to account for and manage the life cycle of nonexpendable personal property in accordance with Federal requirements and DoS regulations.

Audit of the Use of Non-Competitive Contracts in Support of Overseas Contingency Operations in Afghanistan and Iraq

To determine 1) whether acquisition policy was followed in awarding non-competitive contracts in support of overseas contingency operations in Afghanistan and Iraq; and 2) whether, in awarding the non-competitive contracts, the justifications for doing so met the criteria specified in the Federal Acquisition Regulation and the Competition in Contracting Act.

Audit of the Acquisition Planning and Contract Extensions of Iraq Support Services Contracts while Preparing for the Transition to the Worldwide Diplomatic Support Services Contract

To determine whether the DoS followed Federal and DoS requirements in performing acquisition planning and controlling costs associated with contract extensions for the Baghdad Life Support Services and Operations and Maintenance Support Services contracts while preparing for the transition to the worldwide Diplomatic Platform Support Services contract.

Audit of the Department of State's Use of Undefined Contract Actions

To determine whether the DoS Office of Acquisitions Management met Federal Acquisition Regulation requirements and DoS guidelines for issuing contract actions for which performance begins before the contract terms and conditions were finalized, and whether fees or profits were paid to contractors during the period after performance began but before the contract terms and conditions were finalized.

Inspection of the Bureau of Administration, Office of the Procurement Executive, Office of Acquisitions Management, Diplomatic Security Contracts Division

To 1) evaluate how the Office of Acquisitions Management, Diplomatic Security Contracts division uses funds received through a security contract surcharge to provide overall support to the Diplomatic Security program office for the administration of overseas local guard force contracts and 2) assess the Office of Acquisitions Management, Diplomatic Security Contracts division's timeliness in executing contract awards and modifications.

U.S. AGENCY FOR INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT OFFICE OF INSPECTOR GENERAL

Audit of USAID's Contract Termination Practices

To assess USAID's procedures guiding acquisition award terminations.

Table 7.

Ongoing Oversight Projects Related to OIR by Lead IG Partner Agencies, as of June 30, 2021

AIR FORCE AUDIT AGENCY

Installation Access Controls at Ali Al Salem Air Base, Kuwait

To determine whether personnel manage installation access controls in accordance with guidance. Specifically, evaluate integrated defense plans; antiterrorism program; and access procedures at Ali Al Salem Air Base, Kuwait.

Area of Responsibility Dining Facility Operations at Ali Al Salem Air Base, Kuwait

To determine whether Air Force personnel managed overseas contingency operations area of responsibility dining facility operations at Ali Al Salem Air Base, Kuwait, to account for food inventories and food service equipment; provide food services in accordance with health and safety standards; and administer and execute food service contracts.

Government Purchase Card Management at Ali Al Salem Air Base, Kuwait

To determine whether U.S. Air Force Central Command personnel authorized and documented contingency operations Government Purchase Card transactions at Ali Al Salem Air Base, Kuwait, in accordance with guidance and received services and accounted for assets purchased with Government Purchase Card transactions.

APPENDIX F

Planned Oversight Projects

Tables 8 and 9 list the titles and objectives for Lead IG and partner agencies' planned oversight projects.

Table 8.

Planned Oversight Projects Related to OIR by Lead IG Agencies, as of June 30, 2021

DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE OFFICE OF INSPECTOR GENERAL

Audit of Unmanned Systems Cybersecurity Controls

To determine whether the DoD is implementing effective oversight, controls, and processes to mitigate cybersecurity risks to unmanned systems.

Audit of the U.S. Army Central Command's Modernized Enduring Equipment Set in the U.S. Central Command Area of Responsibility

To determine whether the Army's implementation of the modernized enduring equipment sets in the USCENTCOM area of responsibility, to include Kuwait in support of OIR, is meeting mission goals.

Evaluation of the National Geospatial-Intelligence Agency in Support of Combatant Commands Overseas Contingency Operations' Intelligence Requirements

To determine whether the National Geospatial-Intelligence Agency is collecting, analyzing, and distributing geospatial intelligence in support of Combatant Commands Overseas Contingency Operations' intelligence requirements in accordance with law and DoD policy and guidance.

Follow up Audit of Management of Army Prepositioned Equipment

To determine whether the Army implemented the recommendations identified in DODIG-2018-132, "Management of Army Equipment in Kuwait and Qatar," June 29, 2018, to improve Army Prepositioned Stock-Southwest Asia inventory accountability and equipment maintenance.

Audit of Oversight of the Department of Defense Language Interpretation and Translation Enterprise II Contract In Afghanistan

To determine whether the Army provided oversight of DoD Language Interpretation and Translation Enterprise II Contractors in Afghanistan to ensure the contractors fulfilled requirements.

DEPARTMENT OF STATE OFFICE OF INSPECTOR GENERAL

Audit of the Performance of the New Embassy Baghdad Power Plant

To determine whether the DoS 1) assessed the existing and future electrical power needs and infrastructure of the U.S. Embassy in Baghdad when designing the new power plant, 2) conducted oversight of the construction and commissioning of the new power plant, and 3) took measures to mitigate design or construction deficiencies, if any.

Audit of the PAE Operations and Maintenance Contract at Embassy Baghdad, Iraq

To determine whether the DoS is administering the PAE operations and maintenance contract in accordance with Federal and DoS requirements and whether PAE is operating in accordance with the contract terms and conditions.

U.S. AGENCY FOR INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT OFFICE OF INSPECTOR GENERAL

Audit of USAID's Internally Displaced Person's Activities in Syria, Iraq, and Yemen

To determine if USAID is managing risks inherent to providing humanitarian and stabilization assistance and determine the extent to which USAID internally displaced persons activities support the objectives of the joint DoS/USAID strategic plan.

Table 9.

Planned Oversight Projects Related to OIR by Lead IG Partner Agencies, as of June 30, 2021

AIR FORCE AUDIT AGENCY

Personal Wireless Communication System Accountability

To determine if al-Udeid Air Base personnel properly accounted for cellular phones and established personal wireless communication system contracts that met mission requirements.



A U.S. Army Soldier occupies a gunner's hatch during a patrol in Syria. (U.S. Army photo)



ACRONYMS

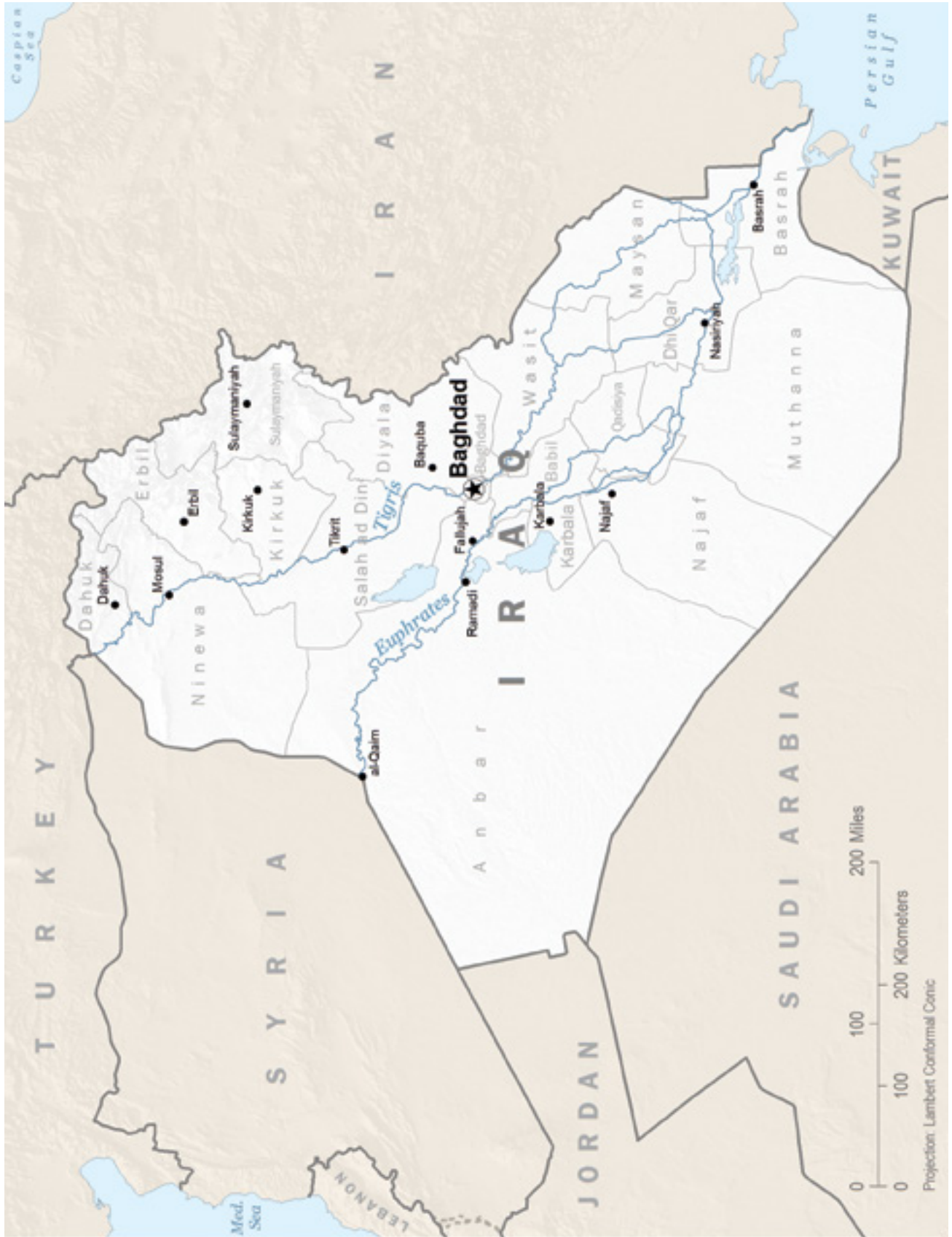
Acronym	
BHA	USAID Bureau of Humanitarian Assistance
CIFG	Counter-ISIS Finance Group
CJTF-OIR	Combined Joint Task Force-OIR
COI	Commission of Integrity
COR	contracting officer representative
COVID-19	coronavirus disease-2019
CPIG	Critical Petroleum Infrastructure Guard
CTEF	Counter-ISIS Train and Equip Fund
CTS	Counterterrorism Service
D-ISIS Coalition	Global Coalition to Defeat ISIS
DCIS	Defense Criminal Investigative Service
DIA	Defense Intelligence Agency
DLA	Defense Logistics Agency
DoD	Department of Defense
DoJ	Department of Justice

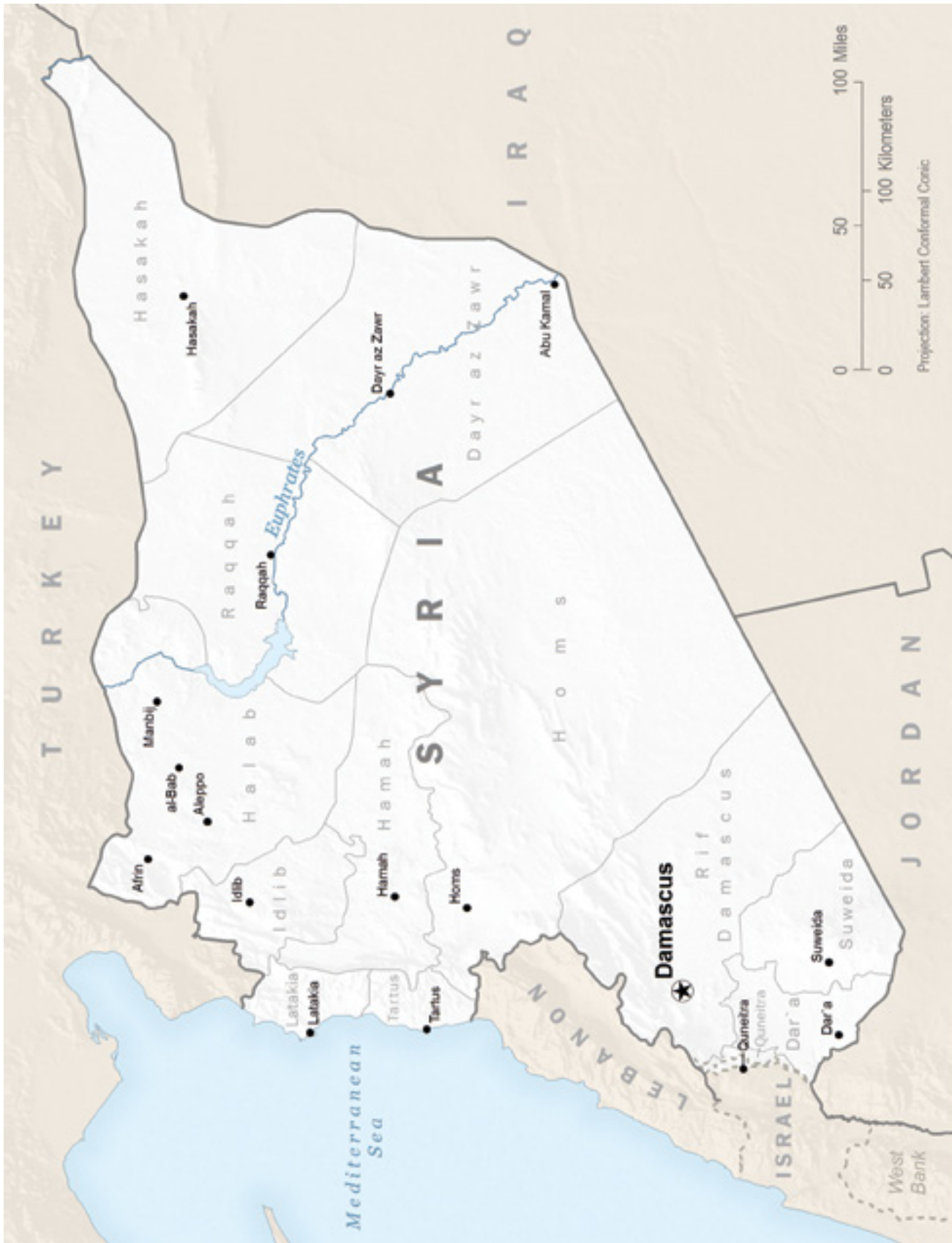
Acronym	
DoS	Department of State
ESF	Economic Support Fund
ESSA	Eastern Syria Security Area
FBI	Federal Bureau of Investigation
FFS	Funding Facility for Stabilization
GCC	Gulf Cooperation Council
HAT	Hezen Anti-Terror Force
ICRRP	Iraq Crisis Response and Resiliency Program
IDP	internally displaced person
IED	improvised explosive device
IHEC	Independent High Electoral Commission
INCLE	DoS Bureau of International Narcotics Control and Law Enforcement
IOM	International Organization for Migration
ISF	Iraqi Security Forces

Acronym	
ISR	intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance
ITAC	Iraqi Terminal Air Controller
JOC-I	Joint Operations Command–Iraq
KRG	Kurdistan Regional Government
Lead IG agencies	The DoD, DoS, and USAID OIGs
MAG	Military Advisory Group
MaT	Mughawir al-Thawra
NDF	National Defense Forces
NMI	NATO Mission-Iraq
OCHA	UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs
OIG	Office of Inspector General
OSC-I	Office of Security Cooperation–Iraq
OUSD(P) ISA	DoD Office of the Undersecretary of Defense for Policy–International Security Affairs
Peshmerga	Kurdish Security Forces
PKK	Kurdistan Workers Party
PMC	Popular Mobilization Committee
PMF	Popular Mobilization Forces
PRM	DoS Bureau of Population, Refugees, and Migration

Acronym	
PrISF	Provincial Internal Security Forces
SDF	Syrian Democratic Forces
SNES	Self-Administration of North and East Syria
SOJTF	Special Operations Joint Task Force
TATP	triacetone triperoxide
TMF	Tribal Mobilization Forces
TSO	Turkish-supported opposition
Treasury	Department of the Treasury
UAV	unmanned aerial vehicles
UN	United Nations
UNAMI	United Nations Assistance Mission in Iraq
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
UNICEF	United Nations Children’s Fund
UNSCR	United Nations Security Council
USAID	U.S. Agency for International Development
USCENTCOM	U.S. Central Command
USEUCOM	U.S. European Command
WHO	World Health Organization
YPG	People’s Protection Units (Kurdish)







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A U.S. Army Soldier shares candy with a Syrian family during a patrol. (U.S. Army photo)

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