

**LEAD INSPECTOR GENERAL REPORT TO THE UNITED STATES CONGRESS**



# **OPERATION INHERENT RESOLVE**

**AND OTHER U.S. GOVERNMENT ACTIVITIES RELATED TO**

# **IRAQ & SYRIA**



**JULY 1, 2024–SEPTEMBER 30, 2024**



**On the cover:** U.S. Army National Guard artillerymen perform a live fire exercise with their counterparts from Iraq. (U.S. Army photo)



We are pleased to present this Lead Inspector General (Lead IG) report to Congress on Operation Inherent Resolve (OIR). This report discharges our quarterly reporting responsibilities pursuant to the Inspector General Act of 1978 (5 U.S.C. 419), as amended.

The United States launched OIR in 2014 to defeat the Islamic State in 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 and 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 (DoD), the Department of State (State), and the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) to further the U.S. Government's policy goals in Iraq and Syria during the period of July 1 through September 30, 2024. This report also discusses the planned, ongoing, and completed oversight work conducted by the Lead IG agencies—the DoD, State, and USAID OIGs—and our partner oversight agencies.

Handwritten signature of Robert P. Storch in black ink.

**Robert P. Storch**  
Lead Inspector General  
for OIR  
Inspector General  
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Handwritten signature of Cardell K. Richardson, Sr. in black ink.

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**Paul K. Martin**  
Inspector General  
U.S. Agency for International  
Development





U.S. Army Soldiers perform an indirect fire training exercise in Syria. (U.S. Army photo)

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Through the Economic Management for Stabilization project, USAID has helped a local food processing and production company to meet strict international market quality-control requirements. (USAID photo)

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Operation Inherent Resolve (OIR) mission is to advise, assist, and enable partner forces until they can independently maintain the enduring defeat of ISIS in Iraq and designated areas of Syria and to set conditions for long-term security cooperation frameworks.<sup>1</sup> The broader counter-ISIS campaign includes supporting the Iraqi government and local Syrian partners with civilian-led stabilization activities.<sup>2</sup>

**The United States and Iraq announced a transition plan for CJTF-OIR operations in Iraq.**<sup>3</sup> In the first phase, which began in September 2024 and will conclude at the end of September 2025, the Coalition will conclude its military mission in Iraq, transitioning to a bilateral security partnership.<sup>4</sup> In the second phase, which will continue through at least September 2026, the Coalition will continue operations against ISIS in Syria from bases in Iraq, subject to conditions on the ground and in consultation with U.S. and Iraqi political leaders and the Coalition.<sup>5</sup> U.S. officials underscored that the United States is not withdrawing from Iraq, but rather the military mission is transitioning to a long-term bilateral security relationship.<sup>6</sup>

**Iran-aligned militias launched attacks on bases hosting U.S. personnel and partner forces in Iraq and Syria.** The attacks forced U.S. and partner forces to prioritize force protection.<sup>7</sup> The Defense Intelligence Agency (DIA) attributed the attacks to militia “impatience” with the pace of U.S.-Iraqi bilateral security discussions and a response to a July 30 U.S. airstrike that targeted a militia site south of Baghdad.<sup>8</sup> The militia attacks are also a response to regional tensions stemming from the Israel-Hamas conflict.<sup>9</sup>

**ISIS remained territorially defeated and appeared to be diminishing in numbers but is determined to grow.**<sup>10</sup> In Iraq, ISIS displayed limited capabilities, while in Syria, the group was more active and continued to target oil infrastructure in SDF-controlled

areas.<sup>11</sup> ISIS almost certainly remains committed to continuing attacks outside of the region. Coalition and partner forces captured several ISIS leaders during the quarter.<sup>12</sup>

**Coalition advisors worked directly with ISF units for the first time in more than a year.**

The change enables the Military Advisor Group to expand advising to the agencies most responsible for operations against ISIS as the influence of the Joint Operations Center-Iraq (JOC-I) over operational commands continues to diminish.<sup>13</sup> The Iraqi Ground Forces Command commanded most operations.<sup>14</sup>

**Iraq plans to conduct its first population census in 27 years.** The census, scheduled for November 20 and 21, 2024, will include questions about the economy, which supporters claim will provide data necessary for rebuilding Iraq's public services. Critics have challenged the government's decision not to include religious sects and ethnicity in the questionnaire.<sup>15</sup>

**The Iraqi Kurdistan Region (IKR) prepared for elections in October.** Voters in the election, the first in 6 years, will select a new Parliament on October 20.<sup>16</sup> During the quarter, Iraq's Independent High Electoral Commission (IHEC) met a key preparatory milestone when it assigned ballot lottery numbers to political parties.<sup>17</sup> The UN Assistance Mission for Iraq continued to provide electoral technical advisory support, while IHEC requested international monitoring of the polling process.<sup>18</sup>

**Iran's new president visited Iraq.** In September, Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian visited multiple locations in Iraq in his first foreign trip since taking office in July, meeting with Prime Minister Mohammed Shia al-Sudani, among others. The visit underscored the importance Iran places on its security and economic relations with Iraq, according to news reports.<sup>19</sup>

**The Houthis and Hamas open offices in Baghdad.** According to a news report, the Iraqi government quietly permitted U.S.-designated terrorist organizations Hamas and the Houthis to open offices in Baghdad in June, after their presence was limited to representational visits for years.<sup>20</sup>

**The Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) partnered with Coalition forces to fight ISIS, but attacks from rival forces redirected SDF focus to self-defense.**<sup>21</sup> Arab tribal factions, with support from Iran-aligned militia groups, launched a large attack across the Euphrates River into the SDF-held northeastern bank, resulting in heavy fighting and casualties.<sup>22</sup> The SDF and the associated Democratic Autonomous Administration of North and East Syria (DAANES) struggled to provide services, security, and governance to the local population, and thus to maintain public support.<sup>23</sup> ISIS leveraged the SDF focus on rival challenges to increase attacks in SDF areas.<sup>24</sup>

**The DAANES granted amnesty to qualified individuals convicted of crimes under the region's counter-terrorism laws.**<sup>25</sup> Under a new amnesty law, announced in July, some Syrian detainees are eligible for a reduced sentence or the chance to be released.<sup>26</sup> Individuals do not qualify if the crimes involved hostilities against the SDF or led to an individual's death.<sup>27</sup>

**The Syrian Free Army (SFA) and Coalition forces partnered to distribute humanitarian assistance at the Rukban camp.** However, the Syrian regime's ongoing blockade of supply routes to Rukban, where the SFA live with their families, endangered the long-term

ISIS leveraged the SDF focus on rival challenges to increase attacks in SDF areas.



sustainability of the camp and SFA support for Coalition forces at the At Tanf Garrison.<sup>28</sup> Once supplies arrived, the SFA resumed training and patrol operations with Coalition forces.<sup>29</sup>

**The SDF temporarily halted all repatriations of Iraqis from al-Hol displaced persons camp through the quarter, hindering efforts to reduce the camp population.<sup>30</sup>**

The U.S. Government continued to prioritize the repatriation of al-Hol residents to their countries of origin as a crucial factor in preventing an ISIS resurgence.<sup>31</sup> Meanwhile, the SDF facilitated the return of 347 Syrians (82 families) from al-Hol to their home communities in northeastern Syria.<sup>32</sup> The United States also facilitated the repatriations of 20 Kyrgyzstan nationals from the al-Hol and Roj camps, and 20 foreign ISIS fighters from SDF detention.<sup>33</sup>

**USAID continued to support the reintegration of Syrians and Iraqis returning from al-Hol.** A USAID-funded case management system launched in September 2023 has processed approximately 3,000 referrals (requests for assistance) from Syrian returnees from al-Hol since it was launched.<sup>34</sup> However, USAID does not have a plan for Syrians originally from regime-controlled areas who wish to reintegrate back to their home communities.<sup>35</sup> While USAID works with vulnerable host communities in Iraq to absorb returns, including those from al-Hol, USAID does not specifically track Iraqi returnees once they depart the Jeddah 1 camp in Iraq.<sup>36</sup> According to USAID, it was too early to assess the impact of its activities in Iraq that support reintegration.<sup>37</sup>

**U.S. Army National Guard artillerymen perform a live fire exercise with their counterparts from Iraq. (U.S. Army photo)**







Paratroopers at a forward arming and refueling point along their route in Iraq and Syria. (U.S. Army photo)

# MISSION UPDATE

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# MISSION UPDATE

*This section describes U.S. and Coalition activities during the quarter and progress toward meeting the OIR campaign objectives. The following section, “Broader U.S. Policy Goals,” describes U.S. diplomatic, stabilization, and humanitarian assistance activities that seek to set the conditions necessary for ultimate success of the OIR mission.*

## INTRODUCTION

The Operation Inherent Resolve (OIR) mission is to advise, assist, and enable partner forces until they can independently maintain the enduring defeat of ISIS in Iraq and designated areas of Syria and to set conditions for long-term security cooperation frameworks.<sup>38</sup>

The Combined Joint Task Force–Operation Inherent Resolve (CJTF-OIR), which comprises troops from 25 countries, executes the OIR campaign.<sup>39</sup> CJTF-OIR is part of the 87-member Global Coalition to Defeat ISIS, led by the United States.<sup>40</sup>

The OIR campaign is organized around four lines of effort.<sup>41</sup> (See Figure 1.) In June 2023, CJTF-OIR issued an amendment to its campaign plan that outlines decisive conditions and conditions-based milestones against which to measure progress of the mission. Specifically, this assessment framework contains milestones to transition OIR activities to a long-term security framework.<sup>42</sup>

Figure 1.

### OIR Lines of Effort

#### 1. ADVISE, ASSIST, AND ENABLE PARTNER FORCES TO MAINTAIN THE DEFEAT OF ISIS

Coalition Forces are focused on transferring the long-term work in the fight against ISIS to local partner forces by providing those forces with advice, assistance, and other measures needed to enable them to maintain the territorial defeat of ISIS.

#### 2. MAINTAIN THE COALITION

The protection and preservation of the Coalition is critical to continuing the mission to maintain the defeat of ISIS.

#### 3. ESTABLISH AN ENDURING SECURITY COOPERATION FRAMEWORK IN IRAQ

This complements parallel efforts at the institutional level by Unified Action Partners (including NATO Mission-Iraq and Office of Security Cooperation-Iraq) to set the conditions for the future transition of the OIR mission.

#### 4. MAXIMIZE EFFECTS IN THE INFORMATION ENVIRONMENT

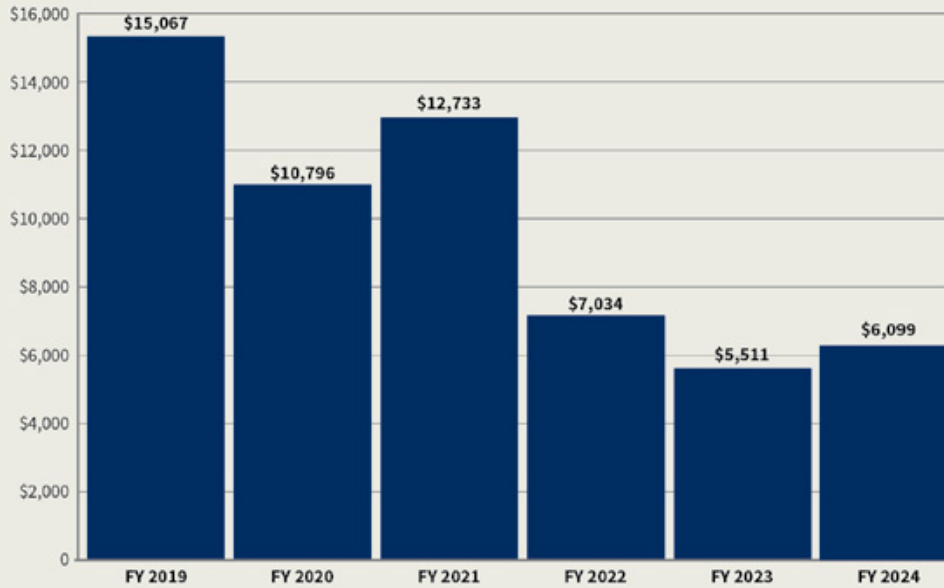
Through press releases and social media, the Coalition reinforces the messages that support CJTF-OIR’s regional partners and combats disinformation from ISIS.



Sources: CJTF-OIR, response to DoD OIG request for information, 23.1 OIR 004, 12/21/2022 and 23.2 OIR 004, 6/21/2023; CJTF-OIR, vetting comment, 7/18/2023.

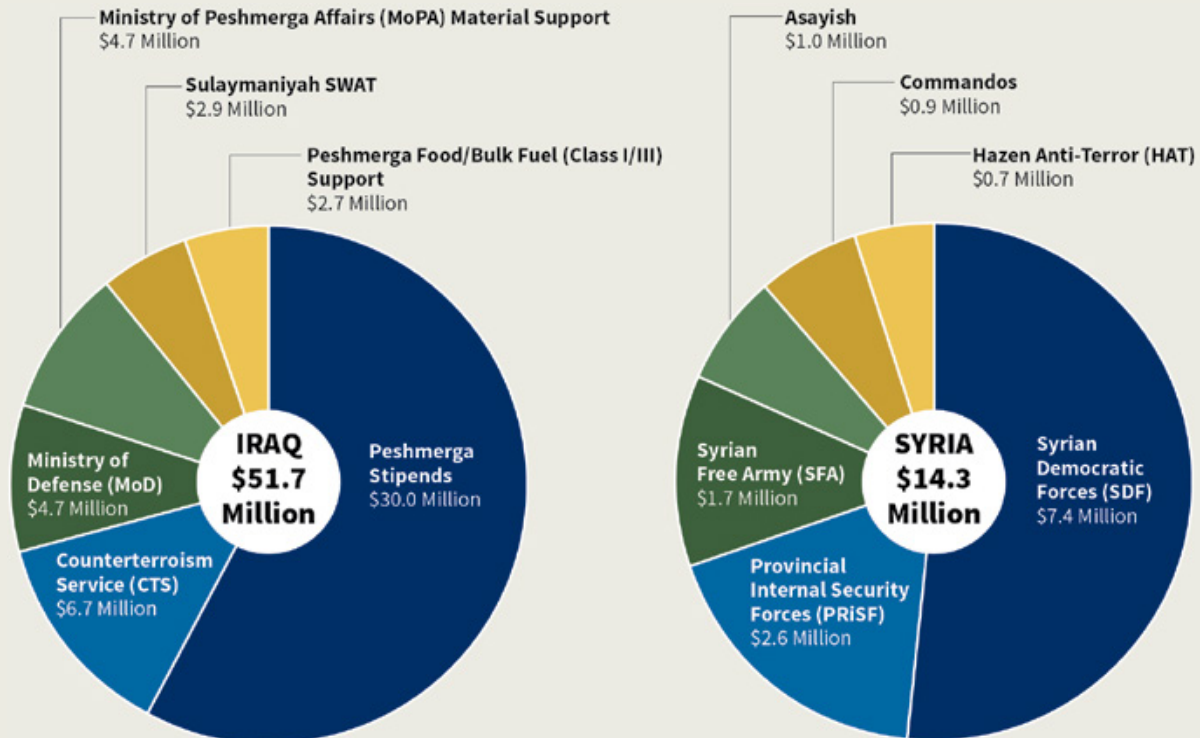
# DOD FUNDING FOR OIR

DoD Enacted Funding for OIR FY 2019-FY 2024, in \$ Millions



Various State and USAID programs receive funding that supports U.S. Government political, stabilization, and humanitarian assistance objectives in Iraq and Syria. Funding information for stabilization and humanitarian assistance programs is available on page 69. State and Mission Iraq require separate funding for personnel, operations, facilities, and security that support U.S. Government activities and programs in Iraq and Syria.

CTEF-funded Support to Iraq and Syria During the Quarter



Notes: Numbers may not add to total due to rounding.  
 Source: CJTF-OIR, vetting comment, 10/15/2024.

CJTF-OIR reported that the four lines of effort remained steady despite the risk of regional escalation due to the ongoing conflict between Israel and Hamas in Gaza and Hezbollah in Lebanon.<sup>43</sup> Force protection remained the highest OIR priority in the Coalition areas of operation.<sup>44</sup> CJTF-OIR said that efforts to advise, assist, and enable partner forces continued amid the heightened force protection, albeit in a non-permissive operational environment.<sup>45</sup>

On the diplomatic front, the U.S. Government continued to devote significant attention to the Defeat ISIS mission via bilateral and multilateral engagements through the Global Coalition to Defeat ISIS, with emphasis on the need and support for repatriations of third-country nationals from northeastern Syria, and advocacy for international funding toward stabilization assistance in Iraq and northeastern Syria, among other continued efforts.<sup>46</sup>

In bilateral and multilateral engagements with Coalition partners, State acknowledged the demand for international attention toward the Israel-Hamas conflict but continued to emphasize the need for sustained commitment to the counter-ISIS mission in Iraq and Syria as a critical element of regional stability.<sup>47</sup>

## FUNDING

CJTF-OIR uses the Counter-ISIS Train and Equip fund (CTEF) as the primary vehicle for providing materiel and other support to partner forces in Iraq, including the Iraqi Kurdistan Region (IKR), and in Syria. Of the \$398 million CTEF appropriation for FY 2024, \$242 million was designated to support partner forces in Iraq, of which \$194 million had been expended as of the end of August. Of the \$156 million designated for Syrian partner forces, \$59.9 million had been expended as of the end of August.<sup>48</sup> (See page 9.)

Congress appropriated \$1.425 billion for Foreign Military Financing (FMF) for Iraq from FY 2019 through FY 2024. Congress appropriated \$175 million for FY 2024, even though State requested a reduced amount of \$75.5 million because previously appropriated FMF funds remained available. At the end of the quarter, \$948.1 million (76 percent of available funds) had been spent. State reported that the allocation of FY 2024 FMF funds is under review and has not yet been finalized or obligated.<sup>49</sup>

CJTF-OIR reported that the CTEF will remain an “agile resource” as long as partner forces require support to facilitate the mission, and the authority to administer the funds.<sup>50</sup> The CTEF is programmed to support the Iraqi government and the Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG) through FY 2026.<sup>51</sup> The CTEF also funds partner forces in Syria.<sup>52</sup>

CJTF-OIR reported that while the CTEF will continue to be a critical tool in providing resources and skills to partner forces, the long-term goal is to reduce partner forces’ dependence on the CTEF.<sup>53</sup> CJTF-OIR noted that long-term plans to enable the Iraqi Security Forces (ISF) and Kurdish Peshmerga to sustain the OIR mission will require the full range of Title 10 and Title 22 security cooperation programs, which are managed by the U.S. Central Command (USCENTCOM) and State, respectively.<sup>54</sup>

**Of the \$398 million CTEF appropriation for FY 2024, \$242 million was designated to support partner forces in Iraq, of which \$194 million had been expended as of the end of August. Of the \$156 million designated for Syrian partner forces, \$59.9 million had been expended as of the end of August.**

# ISIS ACTIVITY AND CAPABILITY

Ten years after the establishment of the Global Coalition to Defeat ISIS, ISIS remains territorially defeated in Iraq and Syria, but a senior U.S. official said the group remains a **“significant threat to the region.”**<sup>55</sup>

CJTF-OIR reported that ISIS appeared to be diminishing in numbers during the quarter. However, the group continued to demonstrate a determination to “remain and grow” and to retain an ability to surge attacks, especially in Syria.<sup>56</sup> The UN Secretary-General reported in July that the risk of an ISIS resurgence had increased during the first half of 2024.<sup>57</sup>

CJTF-OIR reported that the rate of ISIS attacks in Syria was elevated in the first half of 2024 due to attacks in January and during Ramadan, but has remained relatively flat since April, while in Iraq, attacks attributed to ISIS remained **“low and steady.”** ISIS claims attacks carried out against security forces but not against non-combatants, such as local shepherds and farmers, so the actual attack numbers are likely higher.<sup>58</sup>

## ISIS Attack Trends During the Quarter

**IRAQ:** ISIS displayed **limited capabilities**, conducting the lowest number of attacks observed since the onset of the Sunni insurgency in Iraq in 2003.<sup>59</sup> The group also showed no significant improvement in attack sophistication.<sup>60</sup>

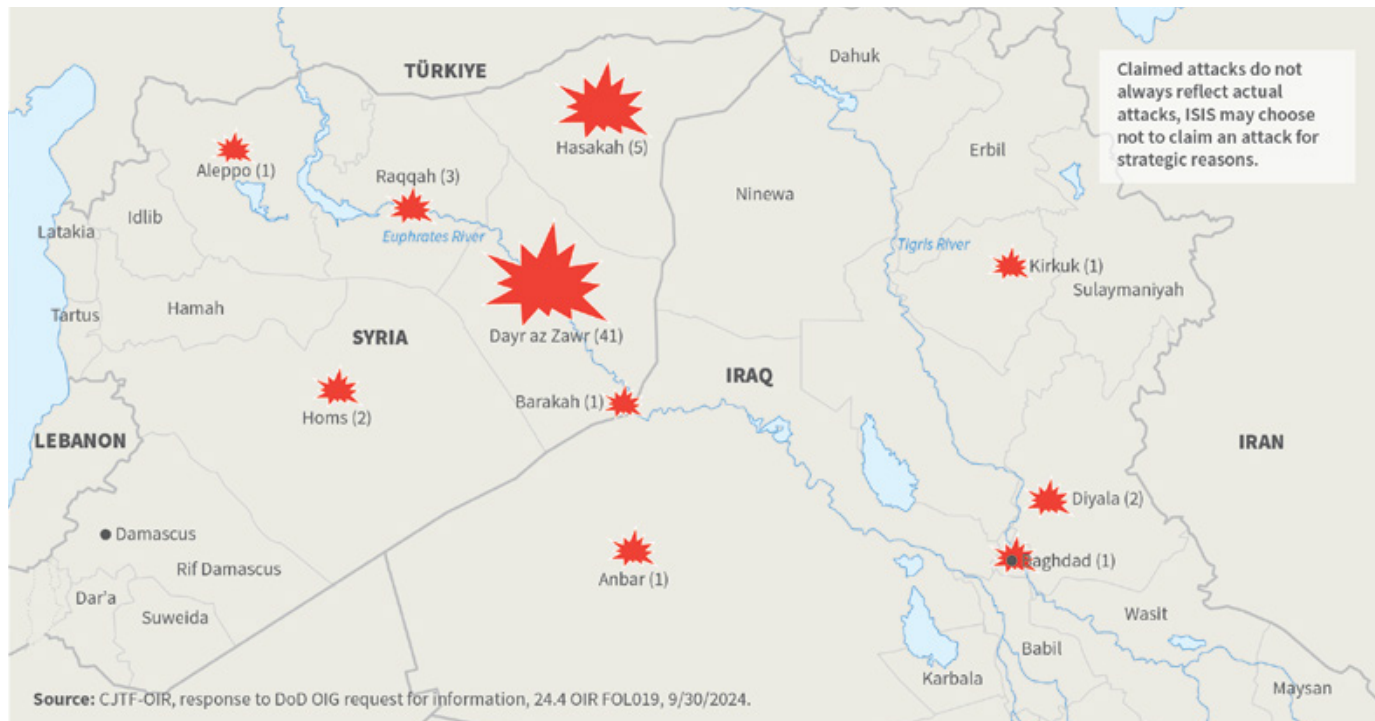
ISIS killed at least four Iraqi police officers in an attack in Diyala province in July.<sup>61</sup>

**SYRIA:** ISIS continued to take advantage of **increased freedom of movement** in SDF-controlled areas to target oil infrastructure as part of the “economic war” it has waged against the SDF for at least a year. ISIS claimed that it damaged 51 oil trucks in Syria since August 2023 and has continued to conduct an extensive extortion campaign on the oil sector.<sup>62</sup>

ISIS continued to take advantage of increased freedom of movement in SDF-controlled areas as SDF intention remained focused on the Middle Euphrates River Valley.

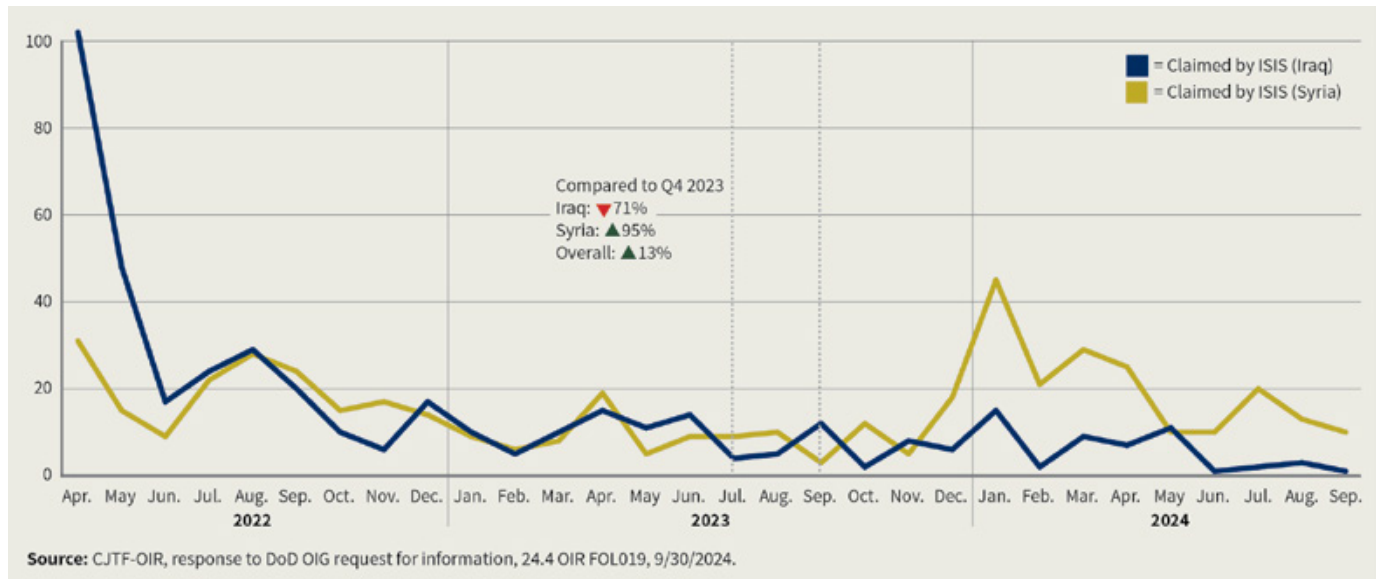
CJTF-OIR reported no noteworthy changes to ISIS organizational structure during this quarter.<sup>63</sup> However, CJTF-OIR reported that an SDF spokesperson said **ISIS has restructured its leadership.** The SDF also said that ISIS has improved its financial system to support its operations in Syria, and has “a significant number of fighters, an operational center, and a media system to promote its activities.”<sup>64</sup>

## ISIS-claimed Attacks by Province, July 1–September 30, 2024



(continued on next page)

## ISIS Attacks by Month, April 2022–September 2024



### ISIS CAPABILITY ASSESSMENT

#### LEADERSHIP

Coalition and partner forces **killed or captured several ISIS leaders** during the quarter.<sup>65</sup> In August, the SDF and Coalition forces captured Khaled Ahmed al-Dandal, an ISIS leader alleged to be aiding escape efforts of detained ISIS fighters in Syria.<sup>66</sup> In July, the SDF arrested the leader of an ISIS IED manufacturing cell. In a separate incident the Asayish captured an ISIS economic cell leader.<sup>67</sup>

In Iraq, a senior ISIS commander was reportedly among militants killed in an operation in Anbar province in August.<sup>68</sup>

#### STRATEGY AND CAPABILITY

In Iraq, ISIS displayed limited capabilities. The group showed **no significant improvement** in operational capabilities or attack sophistication in Iraq and no noteworthy changes to ISIS organizational structure in Syria during the quarter.<sup>69</sup> There were also no changes in the group's recruitment activities in Iraq.<sup>70</sup>

#### EXTERNAL OPERATIONS

ISIS senior leaders in Iraq and Syria almost certainly remain **committed to operations outside the region**.<sup>71</sup> ISIS' official media claimed responsibility for separate knife attacks in Germany and Russia, which killed three people and four prison guards, respectively.<sup>72</sup> ISIS media called for additional attacks in the West.<sup>73</sup>

The UN Secretary-General reported that ISIS in Iraq and Syria (known as "ISIS Core") directs operatives from Afghanistan and neighboring countries to undertake attacks abroad and has tapped into the Afghan and Central Asian diaspora communities for logistical, financial, and operational support.<sup>74</sup> The report said that terrorist threat levels had risen in Europe since ISIS-Khorasan-claimed an attack on a music hall near Moscow in March killed 137 people.<sup>75</sup> Secretary of State Antony J. Blinken said that ISIS affiliates have "gained ground" in sub-Saharan Africa.<sup>76</sup>

#### INFORMATION OPERATIONS

ISIS media also continued to **exploit for propaganda purposes** terrorist attacks committed by ISIS operatives in multiple countries, including attacks in Iran and Russia, to amplify a perception of "heightened threat" and to recruit new members.<sup>77</sup>

#### FINANCES

ISIS Core maintained access to nearly **\$10 million in reserves** and continued to extort and rob local populations, including by stealing livestock from local herders. ISIS also employed international fundraising and recruitment networks. These sources of revenue largely reside outside the formal economy, allowing ISIS Core to sustain its terrorist insurgency.<sup>78</sup>



**CJTF-OIR reported that Iran-aligned militia groups attacked U.S. and Coalition forces in more than 20 separate incidents during the quarter, compared to five attacks the previous quarter.**

## IRAN-ALIGNED MILITIA ACTIVITY

### Iran-Aligned Militias Attack Facilities Hosting U.S. and Coalition Forces

CJTF-OIR reported that Iran-aligned militia groups attacked U.S. and Coalition forces in more than 20 separate incidents during the quarter, compared to 5 attacks the previous quarter.<sup>79</sup> The militias used one-way unmanned aerial systems (UAS), rockets, missiles, and possibly IEDs along main supply routes to stage the attacks.<sup>80</sup> The militias also attacked operations and movements of local partners in Iraq and Syria on multiple occasions.<sup>81</sup>

The attacks occurred despite a reported January directive from Iran’s Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps—Quds Force that instructed militias to avoid provoking U.S. strikes on senior military commanders and key infrastructure, or direct retaliation against Iran.<sup>82</sup> The Defense Intelligence Agency (DIA) reported that despite this quarter’s attacks, the “pause” in attacks has largely stayed in place, compared to November and December 2023, when the militias launched a sustained campaign of attacks.<sup>83</sup>

According to media reports, on July 16, militias launched two, one-way attack drones targeting U.S. and Coalition forces at al-Asad Air Base.<sup>84</sup> On July 25, militias launched rockets targeting al-Asad Air Base and Mission Support Site Euphrates in Syria. The mission support site was attacked again with rockets on July 26 and 27.<sup>85</sup>

The DIA reported that the July attacks were probably due to “impatience with the pace” of those negotiations, noting that the attacks occurred amid the discussions on the future disposition of U.S. troops in Iraq.<sup>86</sup> Militia leaders consistently expressed doubt that diplomatic negotiations to end the Coalition’s presence in Iraq would yield results.<sup>87</sup>

According to media reports, several U.S. Service members were injured in August attacks on the al-Asad Air Base in Iraq and the Rumaylan Landing Zone in Syria.<sup>88</sup> The DIA assessed that the August attacks were probably carried out in response to a July 30 U.S. airstrike in Babil province that killed at least four members of Kata’ib Hezbollah and a Houthi operative as they prepared to launch a drone.<sup>89</sup>

There were no militia attacks on U.S. or Coalition personnel or facilities within the IKR. However, CJTF-OIR reported that the militias continued to try to infiltrate ISF and Peshmerga units throughout Iraq.<sup>90</sup>

The DIA reported that militia attacks were publicized on a new Telegram account called “Al Thawriyun” (“The Revolutionaries”), which claimed to be affiliated with the Islamic Resistance in Iraq, an umbrella of several Iran-aligned militia groups formed in the aftermath of the conflict between Israel and Hamas in Gaza.<sup>91</sup>

## U.S. Forces Prioritize Force Protection, but Continue Advising Partner Forces

CJTF-OIR reported that Coalition forces remained at threat level “Charlie” during the quarter, which required assets used for counter-ISIS operations to be tasked for force protection.<sup>92</sup> While no orders were issued restricting movement of personnel, some rotary wing and fixed wing assets were reprioritized to increase their availability for force protection and essential movement, CJTF-OIR said.<sup>93</sup>

CJTF-OIR said that the militia attacks had no visible impact on the OIR campaign, the Coalition efforts to advise partner forces, or partner force activities.<sup>94</sup> Coalition advisors continued to advise the ISF and SDF and provide training and assistance to both forces.<sup>95</sup> No additional U.S. or Coalition forces were deployed to the OIR mission in response to the militia attacks.<sup>96</sup>

However, CJTF-OIR said that regional instability had resulted in a more challenging operational environment and forced partner forces to shift their attention to force protection and base defense.<sup>97</sup>

Additionally, CJTF-OIR said that advising “slowed” due to the reduction in Coalition intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance (ISR) in support of the ISF.<sup>98</sup> CJTF-OIR noted a “slight negative impact” to Coalition advising of the ISF due to a reduction in Coalition ISR availability, but said that the reduction had the “positive” effect of forcing the ISF to rely on its own ISR.<sup>99</sup>

CJTF-OIR said that Houthi targeting of ships in the Red Sea continued to impact CJTF-OIR resourcing, rotations, and resupply as cargo ships were unable to transit through the Red Sea and instead were forced to navigate around Africa.<sup>100</sup> The longer route resulted in significant delays and additional cost, which affected various units supporting CJTF-OIR throughout Iraq and Syria.<sup>101</sup>

In a new development, Hamas, whose political wing is based in Doha and other areas of the Middle East, opened an office in Baghdad during the quarter.<sup>102</sup> According to a media reports and independent analysts, the Iraqi government had quietly allowed the Palestinian group to establish a more permanent presence in Iraq.<sup>103</sup> A State spokesman said that the development “risks bringing Iraq deeper into regional conflicts” and that the United States had shared these concerns with the Iraqi government.<sup>104</sup>

## IRAQI SECURITY FORCES

The Coalition’s Military Advisory Group continued to advise, enable, and assist the Iraqi Security Forces (ISF)—including the Iraqi Air Force and the Iraqi Ground Forces Command—and Kurdish Peshmerga in bases in Baghdad and Erbil.<sup>105</sup> The Special Operations Advisory Group advised, enabled and assisted the Counter Terrorism Service (CTS) from bases in Anbar province.<sup>106</sup> (See page 15.)

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# COALITION ADVISING IN IRAQ

## Kurdish Peshmerga

Within the Iraqi Kurdistan region, Coalition advisors work with the Ministry of Peshmerga Affairs (MoPA) to implement a 4-year reform plan established between the DoD and the Kurdistan Regional Government. The reform plan seeks to unify partisan Peshmerga forces under the MoPA, which is responsible for maintaining the territorial integrity of the Iraqi Kurdistan Region and coordinating with the Iraqi Ministry of Defense in Baghdad.

## Iraqi Security Forces (ISF)

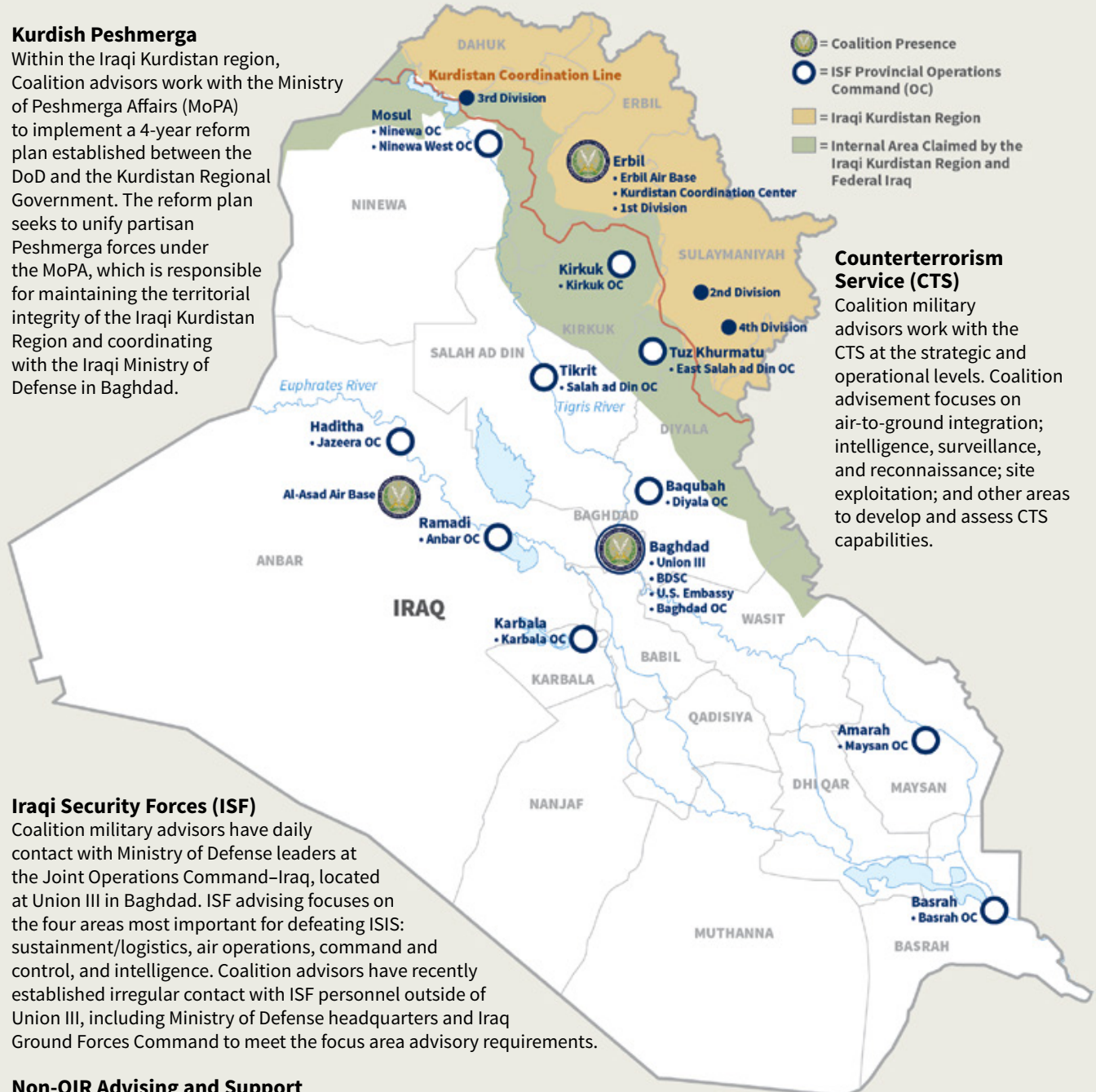
Coalition military advisors have daily contact with Ministry of Defense leaders at the Joint Operations Command–Iraq, located at Union III in Baghdad. ISF advising focuses on the four areas most important for defeating ISIS: sustainment/logistics, air operations, command and control, and intelligence. Coalition advisors have recently established irregular contact with ISF personnel outside of Union III, including Ministry of Defense headquarters and Iraq Ground Forces Command to meet the focus area advisory requirements.

## Non-OIR Advising and Support

The Office of Security Cooperation–Iraq at the U.S. Embassy in Baghdad conducts bilateral security assistance and security cooperation activities, including training, with partner forces. NATO Mission–Iraq advises ISF leaders at the ministerial level.

**Note:** OCs may not be shown in their actual location within each province.

**Source:** CJTF–OIR, vetting comment, 7/16/2024; DIA, vetting comment, 10/24/2024.



## Counterterrorism Service (CTS)

Coalition military advisors work with the CTS at the strategic and operational levels. Coalition advisement focuses on air-to-ground integration; intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance; site exploitation; and other areas to develop and assess CTS capabilities.

## The United States and Iraq Agree on a Transition Plan for U.S. Forces in Iraq

On September 27, the United States and Iraq announced a two-phase transition plan for CJTF-OIR operations in Iraq.<sup>107</sup> In the first phase, which began in September 2024 and will conclude at the end of September 2025, the Coalition will conclude its military mission in Iraq, transitioning to a bilateral security partnership.<sup>108</sup>

In the second phase, which will continue through at least September 2026, the Coalition will continue operations against ISIS in northeastern Syria from bases in Iraq, subject to conditions on the ground and in consultation with U.S. and Iraqi political leaders and the Coalition.<sup>109</sup>

U.S. officials underscored that the United States is not withdrawing from Iraq, but rather the military mission is transitioning to a long-term bilateral security relationship after a decade of successful international cooperation between the U.S. military, the Coalition, and Iraqi Security Forces, which resulted in the territorial defeat of ISIS in Iraq and Syria.<sup>110</sup>

The transition to a bilateral security relationship will include changes to U.S. force posture and troop numbers, but specific changes in posture and numbers are still in the planning process and under review as of the publishing of this report.<sup>111</sup>

In opening remarks at a Global Coalition to Defeat ISIS meeting in September, Secretary of State Antony J. Blinken said that the United States will maintain counterterrorism efforts from outside of Iraq, including in Syria, “for as long as needed.”<sup>112</sup>

U.S. officials said that the agreed-upon transition of forces was based on a U.S.-Iraq Higher Military Commission review of three factors—the threat posed by ISIS, the operational environment in Iraq, and the Iraqi Security Forces capability—to determine how and when the military mission would evolve.<sup>113</sup> Discussions will continue to determine a timeline and shape the future of the U.S.-Iraq bilateral security relationship in accordance with Iraq’s constitution and the 2008 U.S.-Iraq Strategic Framework Agreement.<sup>114</sup>

CJTF-OIR reported that delegates to the U.S.-Iraq Joint Security Cooperation Dialogue (JSCD) discussed the continued development of Iraq’s security and defense capabilities through liaison officers, training, and traditional security cooperation programs.<sup>115</sup> The Coalition remains committed to advising the Peshmerga in accordance with the Memorandum of Understanding. Continued advising of the CTS will depend on bilateral agreements reached between the United States and Iraq, CJTF-OIR said.<sup>116</sup>

The Office of the Under Secretary of Defense for Policy (OUSD(P)) reported that discussions also include continued U.S. military assistance through Foreign Military Sales and Foreign Military Financing and opportunities to expand Iraqi participation in regional military exercises.<sup>117</sup>

**In the first phase, which began in September 2024 and will conclude at the end of September 2025, the Coalition will conclude its military mission in Iraq, transitioning to a bilateral security partnership.**

## Monitoring U.S. Assistance to the ISF and Peshmerga forces

Articles provided to Iraq under the Arms Export Control Act are subject to end-use monitoring (EUM). Iraq is considered a “hostile environment” by the DoD, with movement and security restrictions that limit U.S. personnel from conducting the mandated regular observations of the articles’ status. Therefore, DoD EUM reports are routinely provided by the Iraqi government to supplement direct observations by U.S. personnel. The DoD and State have accepted this approach, which best ensures that inventory tracking remains up to date despite operational challenges.<sup>118</sup>

Approximately 90 percent of EUM is currently executed by the Iraqi Ministries of Defense and Interior, and the CTS. In addition, third parties conduct EUM in locations that are inaccessible to U.S. personnel. Bar codes are normally used to track the equipment, though they are not on every item, including the largest category of equipment, night vision devices. In the absence of bar codes, monitors check serial numbers, which appear on most defense articles.<sup>119</sup>

State reported that it was not aware of any instances during the quarter in which the United States provided assistance to the ISF or Peshmerga that violated the Leahy law. The Leahy law refers to two statutory provisions prohibiting the United States from providing certain assistance to a unit of a foreign security force if the U.S. Government has credible information that the unit has committed a gross violation of human rights. State vets proposed recipients of such assistance to determine if there is credible information that they have committed a gross violation of human rights.<sup>120</sup>

## Operations Against ISIS During the Quarter

The ISF and KSF continued to conduct independent and partnered operations against ISIS during the quarter. Multiple organizations executed the operations, including the CTS; comprising the Iraqi Air Force (IqAF) and the Army Aviation Command; and several Kurdish forces, which the Coalition enables and advises.<sup>121</sup>

Other forces that do not receive direct Coalition support carried out counter-ISIS operations, including: the Iraqi Ground Forces Command; the Popular Mobilization Forces; and partisan forces associated with political parties in the IKR, including the 70s and 80s units, which are commanded by the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan and the Kurdistan Democratic Party, respectively.<sup>122</sup>

CJTF-OIR reported that Coalition forces partnered with the ISF in operations against ISIS but did not track major ground operations because those operations are now under the command of the Iraqi Ground Forces Command, which operates from a base near Baghdad, rather than the Joint Operations Center-Iraq (JOC-I), which CJTF-OIR advises from Union III in Baghdad.<sup>123</sup>

In one notable partnered operation on August 29, the ISF and U.S. forces raided ISIS locations in Anbar province, killing at least 15 ISIS fighters. USCENTCOM confirmed in a

press release that four ISIS leaders were killed during the partnered raid, including Ahmad Hamid Husayn Abd-al-Jalil al-Ithawi, responsible for all operations in Iraq; Abu Ali al-Tunisi, responsible for overseeing technical development; Abu Hammam, responsible for overseeing all operations in western Iraq; and Shakir Abu Ahmad al-Issawi, responsible for overseeing military operations in western Iraq.<sup>124</sup> The DIA reported that the forces located weapons, grenades, and explosive suicide belts at the raid sites, and the ISF continues to exploit captured enemy material from these locations.<sup>125</sup>

CJTF-OIR reported that various Iraqi forces often conduct combined operations against ISIS. For instance, a late June operation in Salah ad-Din province, executed by the CTS and the Iraqi National Intelligence Service, relied on JOC-I targeting cell reconnaissance and Iraqi Air Force targeting of a tunnel and other hideouts. The joint operation resulted in the deaths of seven ISIS fighters.<sup>126</sup>

## The CTS Arrests ISIS Fighters, Improves Forensics Capabilities

The CTS consists of three geographically dispersed special forces brigades, an operational headquarters, a strategic command, and a warfare school known as the Academia, which recruits, trains, and generates the force.<sup>127</sup> CJTF-OIR reported that the Academia was on track to achieve enrollment mandates for 2024.<sup>128</sup> The Academia is proficient in planning and works with the CTS to ensure that personnel are adequately equipped and operationally employed through joint planning with Coalition advisors.<sup>129</sup>

As Iraq's premier counterterrorism force, the CTS led raids to arrest ISIS fighters across northern and western Iraq throughout the quarter.<sup>130</sup> The CTS executed arrests in Kirkuk, Anbar, Sulaymaniyah, and Baghdad provinces independently and in coordination with the Iraqi National Intelligence Service.<sup>131</sup> Those arrested included an ISIS transporter and smuggler and an officer in charge of oil derivatives, among other people arrested.<sup>132</sup> The CTS destroyed five ISIS hideouts during a raid in the Hamrin Mountains.<sup>133</sup>

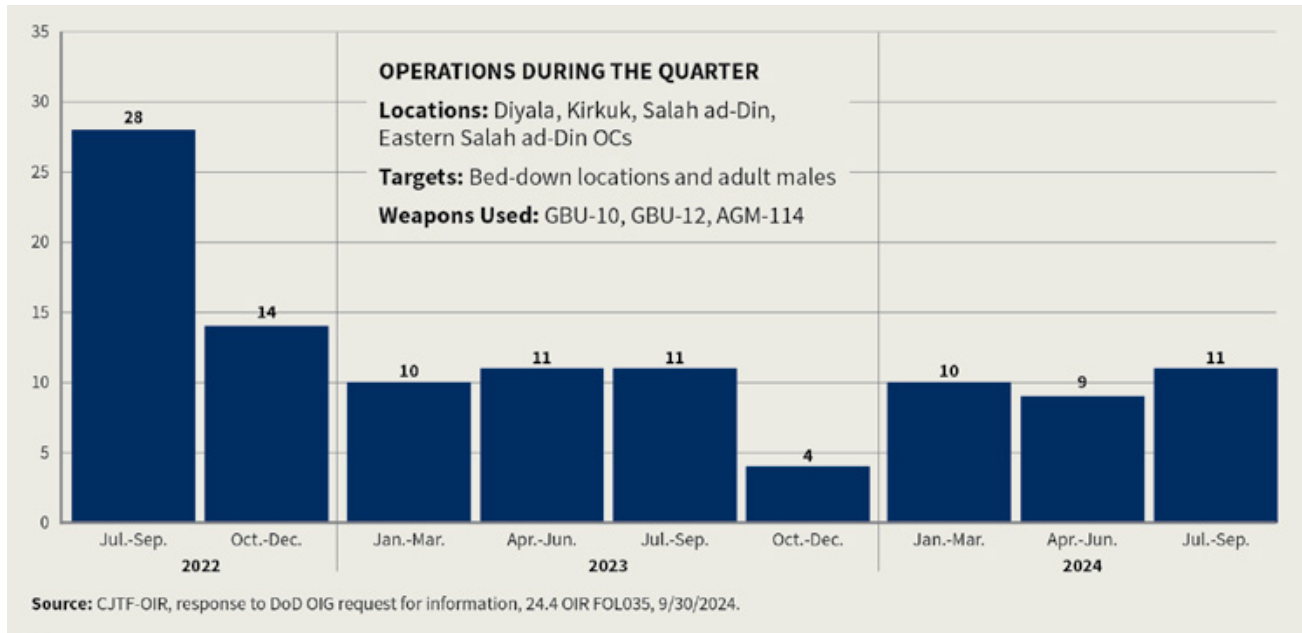
Additionally, CJTF-OIR reported that the CTS has made progress in its forensics capability through fielding of the automated biometric identification system.<sup>134</sup> In June, the Ministry of Interior announced a government tender for the biometric system, according to an Iraqi Embassy news release.<sup>135</sup> CJTF-OIR reported that the system is intended to enhance evidence collection by improving fingerprint analysis for use during trials.<sup>136</sup>

This CTS advancement toward collecting evidence occurred as the mandate of the United Nations Investigative Team to Promote Accountability for Crimes Committed by Da'esh/ISIL (UNITAD) concluded in September, according to Iraqi news reports. The UN team provided financial and technical assistance to Iraq's forensic institutions, such as the Mass Graves Directorate, to establish digital forensic laboratories in seven criminal courts to aid in the prosecution of cases against ISIS.<sup>137</sup>

In addition to biometrics, CJTF-OIR reported that the CTS is in the process of building new Air Wing support capabilities that will provide organic air support to the CTS in the future.<sup>138</sup> The CTS also uses Iraqi Tactical Air Controllers to coordinate and deliver surface-to-surface and air-to-surface munitions.<sup>139</sup>

The CTS consists of three geographically dispersed special forces brigades, an operational headquarters, a strategic command, and a warfare school known as the Academia, which recruits, trains, and generates the force.

Figure 2.

**Counter-ISIS Airstrikes by Iraqi Aircraft, July 2022-September 2024**

### Iraqi Air Force Conducts Four Independent Airstrikes Against ISIS

CJTF-OIR reported that the IqAF remains the ISF’s “most reliable mechanism” for executing operations against ISIS.<sup>140</sup> During the quarter, the IqAF conducted seven successful airstrikes against ISIS targets, including four independent airstrikes.<sup>141</sup> (See Figure 2.)

CJTF-OIR said that the airstrikes met objectives and were publicized to provide a message to the people of Iraq that the ISF remains committed to the enduring defeat of ISIS.<sup>142</sup>

However, CJTF-OIR reported that the IqAF continued to exhibit “significant sustainment shortfalls.”<sup>143</sup> CJTF-OIR assessed that the IqAF’s 32 F-16 aircraft conduct an average of 5 sorties per day compared to an average of 24 sorties per day for a typical U.S. 24-aircraft fighter squadron. CJTF-OIR said the operational shortfall was due to a lack of qualified aircrew, aircraft maintenance, and logistics support.<sup>144</sup>

CJTF-OIR said that there were “still challenges” with the ISF accepting Coalition advice to better utilize their intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance capabilities and air-to-ground strike capable aircraft. The ISF showed “slight improvement” in this area during the three independent airstrikes it carried out against ISIS.<sup>145</sup>

Additionally, CJTF-OIR said that the IqAF “seems hesitant” to utilize non-fighter aircraft for air-to-ground strikes, even though doing so would allow it to use aircraft such as the Cessna Caravan, which is equipped with Hellfire missiles and laser-target designators.<sup>146</sup> While the

**Iraq Minister of Defense Muhammad al-Abbasi participates in a bilateral discussion at the Pentagon, Washington, D.C., on July 23. (DoD photo)**



IqAF used the Cessna Caravan to conduct three of the seven airstrikes executed this quarter, it still relies heavily on the F-16 fleet for air-to-ground strikes.<sup>147</sup>

CJTF-OIR said that Coalition advisors worked with the IqAF to identify sustainment gaps and built funding requirements into the FY 2026 CTEF budget request to address these gaps.<sup>148</sup> The Coalition is also planning an airspace management seminar, CJTF-OIR said.<sup>149</sup>

CJTF-OIR reported progress in enrolling Iraqi Tactical Air Controllers into U.S. Joint Tactical Air Controller qualification courses, and it is expected that they will attend training in California in March 2025.<sup>150</sup>

## **Coalition Advisors Meet with ISF Components Operating Outside of JOC-I Control**

The Coalition continued advising the ISF from the JOC-I, a cross-functional organization based in Baghdad that operates using Ministry of Defense assets and reports to the Prime Minister.<sup>151</sup>

However, CJTF-OIR said the JOC-I does not command operations against ISIS in a “Western sense.”<sup>152</sup> Rather, the JOC-I operates as an “interface” between the Prime Minister and multiple government agencies, including the ISF.<sup>153</sup> As such, it directs operations on behalf of the Prime Minister, provides reports on security concerns to the Prime Minister, and is the central authority for coordination and security of civil-military operations, such as pilgrimages, protests, and responses to natural or man-made disasters.<sup>154</sup>

CJTF-OIR reported that there continued to be limited coordination between the JOC-I and the Ministry of Defense, which CJTF-OIR described as a “challenge.”<sup>155</sup> Additionally, JOC-I influence over joint operations diminished as provincial operations commands took over planning of operations against ISIS, and the JOC-I continued to execute “little, if any,” authority over the IqAF, CJTF-OIR said.<sup>156</sup>



To better advise the IqAF, last quarter, Coalition advisors began going to IqAF bases and the Air Defense Command in Baghdad to advise the IqAE at the operational level.<sup>157</sup> Advisors have also begun meeting with Ministry of Defense (MoD) staff directly this quarter, visiting the deputy chief of staff of logistics, the logistics and maintenance directorate, supply warehouses, the Air Defense Command and Operations Center, and the Jazirah Operations Command at al-Asad Air Base.<sup>158</sup>

CJTF-OIR said that the visits were a “significant change” in Coalition advising efforts as advisors sought to expand advising to the agencies most responsible for each warfighting function. The visits were the first advising trips outside of Union III in Baghdad, where the JOC-I is based, in over a year and a half. CJTF-OIR said the visits also improved efforts to coordinate their advice on equipment transfers from the CTEF.<sup>159</sup>

## JOC-I Maintains “Critical Role” in Several Warfighting Functions

CJTF-OIR said that while the JOC-I does not command operations, it still maintains a “critical role” in the intelligence fusion, public affairs and information operations, and deliberate targeting processes that culminate in air-to-ground strikes.<sup>160</sup> Additionally, CJTF-OIR said that the announced transition of U.S. forces in Iraq has not affected the institutional role of the JOC-I or the relationship Coalition advisors maintain with the JOC-I.<sup>161</sup>

Coalition advisors continued to support the ISF in the following warfighting functions.

- **Command and Control:** Coalition advisors visited the MoD to demonstrate the Harris C2 communications system and prepared a similar demonstration for the JOC-I.<sup>162</sup>
- **Fires:** Coalition advisors visited the Air Defense Operations Center and Air Defense Command and prepared an airspace management seminar.<sup>163</sup>
- **Logistics and Sustainment:** Coalition advisors visited sustainment facilities at Camp Taji and al-Asad Air Base and met with the deputy chief of staff of logistics, who directs the ISF’s sustainment capabilities.<sup>164</sup>
- **Intelligence:** The Coalition advised on the ISF’s deliberate targeting process, from intelligence collection through strike execution and post-strike battle damage assessment.<sup>165</sup>

## Iraqi Police Assume Security in Areas Formerly Under Army Control

The DIA reported that the Ministry of Interior (MoI) continued to assume responsibility for security in areas of the country. In July, Iraqi police assumed responsibility for the security of Fallujah and surrounding districts in Anbar province, replacing the Iraqi Army and Popular Mobilization Forces that had occupied the city since 2016.<sup>166</sup>

The transition to MoI control followed the February transfer of security responsibility for Samarra in the Salah ad-Din province to the MoI’s Federal Police and subsequent dissolution of the Iraqi Army’s Samarra Operations Command.<sup>167</sup> In May, the MoI claimed civil law

enforcement had assumed security responsibility for six provinces in 2023, including Babil, Qadisiyah, Muthanna, Najaf, Wasit, and “probably Baghdad,” according to the DIA.<sup>168</sup>

The DIA said that Ramadi, the capital of Anbar, is not likely to transfer to local law enforcement until 2025 because the Iraqi government plans to focus first on further normalization of security in Baghdad and in other provinces, including Basrah, Diyala, Kirkuk, and Maysan.<sup>169</sup>

Ongoing concerns over the stability of Kirkuk, Ninewa, and other parts of Salah ad-Din have repeatedly delayed transfer of responsibility to the Iraqi police, the DIA said. The DIA assessed that the Iraqi Army and Popular Mobilization Forces are likely to remain in rural portions of Anbar, Diyala, Kirkuk, Ninewa, and Salah ad-Din provinces after urban centers in those provinces are eventually turned over to local police.<sup>170</sup>

## KURDISH PESHMERGA

In September 2022, the United States revised and renewed a memorandum of understanding (MoU) with the Kurdistan Regional Government’s (KRG’s) Ministry of Peshmerga Affairs (MoPA) to support reform measures that seek to create a unified, nonpartisan military that operates under MoPA command.<sup>171</sup> The non-binding MoU serves as an organizing framework for DoD counter-ISIS support to the MoPA since 2016 and encourages continued MoPA reform. The MoU will remain in effect until the end of September 2026, subject to the availability of funds.<sup>172</sup>

A key element of the Peshmerga reform plan is the transfer to the MoPA command forces belonging to the two biggest political parties—the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (PUK) and the Kurdistan Democratic Party (KDP). Specifically, the MoU calls for the transfer of the PUK’s 70s Units and the KDP’s 80s Units to the command of the MoPA.<sup>173</sup>

In line with the reform plan, thousands of personnel have transferred from these politically affiliated forces to the MoPA, where they have been organized into units known as Regional Guard Brigades (RGB) assigned to one of four MoPA divisions.<sup>174</sup> The transfers are ongoing with the aim of establishing 11 divisions that unite all units under the MoPA’s command by September 2026.<sup>175</sup>

CJTF-OIR reported that the 1st and 2nd Divisions have been operational since March. The 3rd and 4th Divisions experienced some delays due to disagreements between the 80s Unit and the MoPA. However, the 3rd Division is receiving funding to improve headquarters infrastructure and is scheduled to receive equipment and weapons from the MoPA. The 4th Division began receiving Coalition advising in mid-July.<sup>176</sup>

### Key Milestones of Security Reform Have Not Been Achieved

CJTF-OIR reported that the MoPA has completed a plan to unify the 70s and 80s forces under its control.<sup>177</sup> The plan will expand the number of RGBs, which currently stands at 24.<sup>178</sup> CJTF-OIR said that at least four brigades and likely more remain outside of the MoPA and under the command of the partisan 70s and 80s Units.<sup>179</sup> Pending KRG approval, the intent is to reorganize 138,000 personnel from the 70s and 80s Units under MoPA command.<sup>180</sup>



Members of the CJTF-OIR Ministry Advisor Group participate in a command post exercise with the Peshmerga on September 25. (U.S. Army photo)

The reorganization will leave several forces outside of the MoPA, including partisan counterterrorism and police forces, an oil protection force, and gendarmerie, CJTF-OIR said.<sup>181</sup>

CJTF-OIR reported that the 4-year Peshmerga reform plan remains on track. However, the following milestones have not yet been achieved at the end of the quarter.<sup>182</sup>

- **KRG approval of the plan to reorganize 70s and 80s Forces systematically under MoPA authority over the next 3 years.** In May, the MoPA minister approved a plan that seeks to create 11 divisions organized under two area commands by the time the MoU is fully executed. The plan is still pending approval of the KRG prime minister and president.<sup>183</sup>
- **The development of a sustainable vision for the MoPA's future force structure.** On July 10, the MoPA minister endorsed the Peshmerga Force Operating Concept, which outlines a sustainable vision for the MoPA's future force structure. This document also requires approval from the KRG prime minister and president.<sup>184</sup>
- **A plan to financially sustain a 138,000-strong MoPA force structure.** During the annual MoU assessment meeting in January 2024, senior leaders agreed to adjust the target date for this milestone to align with the creation of area commands beginning in March 2025 and achieving completion in September 2025.<sup>185</sup>
- **The implementation of financial mechanisms.** The MoPA is working to expand an electronic funds transfer system for Peshmerga salaries, a single line of accounting for all Peshmerga forces, and a service retirement plan. The single line of accounting milestone has been postponed until March 2025. The retirement plan is ahead of schedule.<sup>186</sup>

CJTF-OIR reported that the MoPA's reform goals remain heavily dependent on Coalition assistance and that any reduction in the timeline for reforms would condense advising efforts and constrain the development of partner forces.<sup>187</sup> Similarly, CJTF-OIR said that limitations on Coalition advising could potentially cause premature validations and assessments, which may lead to inaccurate assumptions and a false confidence in Peshmerga capabilities.<sup>188</sup> Additionally, CJTF-OIR said that it expected to continue to support Peshmerga reform and to deliver CTEF-funded equipment and support beyond October 2026.<sup>189</sup>

**CJTF-OIR said that relations between KDP and PUK in areas outside the IKR are also breaking down.**

### Political Tensions Hinder MoPA Reform Efforts

The DIA reported that the ongoing rivalry and mistrust between the KDP and PUK continued to undermine efforts to reform the Peshmerga under a single unified MoPA command.<sup>190</sup> CJTF-OIR assessed that tensions between the KDP and the PUK slightly increased during the quarter due to “posturing” ahead of the KRG’s October 20 parliamentary elections, among other issues.<sup>191</sup>

CJTF-OIR said that relations between KDP and PUK in areas outside the IKR are also breaking down.<sup>192</sup> In August, the KDP objected to political maneuvers that installed a new PUK governor in Kirkuk province and expanded PUK authority in Ninewa province.<sup>193</sup> Within the KRG, disagreements between PUK- and KDP-appointed ministers within departments cause friction when the two sides are trying to finalize reforms or legislation that are perceived as unfair by either party, which delays decision-making and ratification of reforms.<sup>194</sup>

Separately, CJTF-OIR reported tension between the MoPA and its staff due to delays in federal Ministry of Finance salary payments to IKR public sector employees. The Iraqi government alleged the KRG has overstated the number of employees and frequently requested additional personal information which has led to months of delays in salaries to all KRG civil servants, including the Peshmerga. Delayed salary payments are likely to cause continued friction between the KRG and the federal government and degrade the ability of the MoPA to perform operations against ISIS, CJTF-OIR said.<sup>195</sup>

The DIA reported that the MoPA continued to face challenges in efforts to create new divisions and brigades beyond the four that are already established.<sup>196</sup> The DIA said that in the absence of a stable political environment, the KDP and PUK may seek to retain control of their partisan forces even after transferring them to the MoPA.<sup>197</sup>

### CTEF-Funded Stipends to Peshmerga Expected to Cease in October 2026

CJTF-OIR reported that Iraq’s federal government has been paying all KRG salaries since February 2024.<sup>198</sup> CTEF-provided stipends supplement salary payments to Peshmerga personnel operating under the MoPA.<sup>199</sup> CJTF-OIR said that CTEF stipends are expected to decrease until they cease at the end of FY 2026, but that the KRG is not expected to provide Peshmerga stipends when the CTEF-funded payments stop.<sup>200</sup>

**CJTF-OIR reported that the MoPA considers the ISIS threat just one of eight threats to the security of the IKR.**

CJTF-OIR reported that if long-term funding is not established for ISF and Peshmerga units, it “can be expected that most units’ mission capability would degrade over time” due to a lack of an ability to sustain equipment. Therefore, CTEF funding “should seek to sustain the operational effectiveness and readiness of primary equipment” necessary to defeat ISIS, CJTF-OIR said.<sup>201</sup>

## **Peshmerga Conduct Operations Against ISIS**

Brigades under the command of the MoPA conducted operations against ISIS during the quarter. The DIA reported that in July the MoPA’s 14th RGB and federal Iraqi Army units collaborated during coordinated counter-ISIS operations that took place in the IKR and federal Iraq.<sup>202</sup> CJTF-OIR said that a clearance operation conducted in July involved the 14th and 18th RGBs and the 80s Unit, which had operational command of the RGB forces. According to CJTF-OIR, the operation was conducted simultaneously but the forces moved independently through their own areas.<sup>203</sup>

CJTF-OIR said that the 2nd Division had reported completing a 5-hour clearing operation in July, which did not yield any results.<sup>204</sup> Additionally, ISF and Peshmerga units conducted a joint security operation in August, according to local news reports.<sup>205</sup> CJTF-OIR reported that Peshmerga forces provided heavy security along the Kurdistan Coordination Line (KCL), a disputed area of northern Iraq where an absence of security has resulted in greater freedom of maneuver for ISIS. The KRG MoI conducted routine security operations within the IKR to reduce the freedom of movement of ISIS personnel into the IKR.<sup>206</sup>

According to CJTF-OIR, Kurdish security forces outside of the control of the MoPA continued to conduct a majority of the operations against ISIS within the IKR because they have better security, intelligence-gathering capabilities, and enabled targeting operations against ISIS cells.<sup>207</sup> By contrast, the RGBs under MoPA command are primarily used to staff observation posts along the KCL to act as a deterrent to ISIS movement into the IKR. CJTF-OIR said that RGBs “undoubtedly” stop the majority of ISIS from infiltrating, but often have less specialized equipment than other security forces and less freedom to engage and pursue ISIS fighters south of the KCL.<sup>208</sup>

However, CJTF-OIR reported that the MoPA considers the ISIS threat just one of eight threats to the security of the IKR.<sup>209</sup> The MoPA’s Operating Concept delineates the other threats as outlawed armed militia groups; the security gap in Kurdish-majority areas south of the IKR; the presence of PKK forces in the border areas; interference, intrusion, and attacks by “neighboring armies”; instability along the IKR’s international borders; the failure to implement Iraq’s 2005 Constitution; trade and use of drugs by organized criminal gangs.<sup>210</sup>

CJTF-OIR reported that Turkish operations in the IKR required the Peshmerga to redeploy units away from the KCL to northern areas of the IKR to prevent further southward expansion of Turkish forces.<sup>211</sup> The KRG is increasingly dependent on the Iraqi government to challenge Turkish activity in the IKR.<sup>212</sup>

Additionally, CJTF-OIR said that the KRG’s attention was also diverted to attend to displaced persons trying to escape Turkish airstrikes and the ensuing wildfires caused by the strikes.<sup>213</sup>

## Joint Brigades Not Yet Operational

CJTF-OIR reported that Joint ISF-Peshmerga Brigades are staffed and conducting operational reconnaissance and planning for future operations in the KCL but are not fully operational due to a lack of equipment to enable sustained operations.<sup>214</sup> Commanders are vetted and prepared to deploy but currently lack the physical means to do so.<sup>215</sup>

CJTF-OIR said that at least two coordinated operations occurred in the KCL during the quarter, but interaction between ISF and Peshmerga forces was limited. Areas of responsibility were deconflicted and ISF and Peshmerga forces cleared separate areas. According to CJTF-OIR, the ISF reported that areas were searched and cleared with no casualties and no persistent force presence. Once the Joint Brigades are fully operational, they will likely be employed to occupy areas which were previously cleared by joint ISF-Peshmerga operations.<sup>216</sup>

CJTF-OIR said that the Joint Brigades are important to the OIR mission because they will enable an enhanced security presence in the KCL.<sup>217</sup>

## MoPA Personnel Lack Training and Funding

CJTF-OIR reported that the Coalition maintains two advisory groups to advise the Peshmerga. The Joint Operations Command Advisor Team–North (JOCAT-N) works with the MoPA to develop its mission planning capability. (See Table 1.) The Security Force Assistance Brigade (SFAB) advises at the MoPA division level.<sup>218</sup>

CJTF-OIR reported that JOCAT-N advisors have observed limited success in advising efforts, while SFAB advisors have seen considerable success.<sup>219</sup> Overall, the 4-year reform plan remains on track, CJTF-OIR said.<sup>220</sup>

Table 1.

### Status of MoPA Warfighting Functions During the Quarter

Function	Capability
<b>Mission Planning</b>	The four divisions operating under the MoPA have a <b>baseline knowledge and practical application of the U.S. operational planning methodology</b> , have demonstrated an ability to apply the basic concepts of military decision-making, and can produce a written operations order to varying degrees. The MoPA's 1st Division can plan operations at a very basic level and has adequately conducted at least one command post exercise that met very basic criteria. The Division also coordinated efforts with two Iraqi Army divisions, mostly by informing the Iraqi Army of Peshmerga operations near the KCL.
<b>Peshmerga Ground Operations</b>	The MoPA intends to plan and conduct operations within IKR while the MoPOC plans and conducts joint operations in the KCL in coordination with ISF. However, CJTF-OIR said this goal will take some time to achieve. The 1st Division conducted at least <b>one operation against ISIS intended to be a clearing operation</b> . However, CJTF-OIR said that it appeared that the operation had little to no impact on countering ISIS.

Function	Capability
<b>Intelligence</b>	<p>The MoPA's intelligence collection within the IKR is "efficient." The four divisions demonstrate an ability to contribute intelligence planning and considerations into the operational planning process at a basic level. However, the MoPA <b>relies almost exclusively on human intelligence</b> sources; ISR capability is minimal to non-existent.</p> <p>The divisions rely solely on prepositioned security cameras at select RGB checkpoints and observation posts. Additionally, the division intelligence directorates <b>have not demonstrated an ability to incorporate intelligence</b> products or manage intelligence collection for real-world operations.</p> <p>The Coalition conducted training on the intelligence cycle and intelligence gathering. The MoPA is establishing a department for UAS operations, planning, and maintenance, and has conducted a course on drones.</p>
<b>Command and Control (C2)</b>	<p>Division commanders expressed concern with MoPA Chief of Staff priorities, which made it <b>difficult for divisions to exercise initiative</b> and establish priorities in support of higher guidance. Additionally, the only actual command and control within the divisions are conversations between the individual division commanders and their RGB commanders.</p> <p>The most significant improvement with the divisional HQs is in establishing <b>routine battle rhythms</b> within the staffs, and with individual staff sections at the division level and their subordinate RGB staffs.</p>
<b>Artillery</b>	<p>MoPA artillery units employ an array of weapon systems and <b>maintain proficiency in the delivery of accurate indirect fire</b>. However, due to a lack of ammunition, the Peshmerga's ability to integrate indirect fires in support of maneuver operations remains untested.</p> <p>CJTF-OIR divested mortars and howitzers to the MoPA, which disbursed them to the 1st and 2nd Support Force Commands (SFC). Four RGBs will also receive mortars. The divestments will increase indirect fire capability with training coordinated by Office of Security Cooperation-Iraq. Only the 2nd SFC has requested training, which has begun under Coalition supervision. Both SFCs are willing to conduct joint exercise with divisions, which would increase the divisions' capabilities with indirect fire.</p>
<b>Logistics and Sustainment</b>	<p>MoPA is making <b>slow but steady progress in improving the logistics and sustainment</b> of its force. The two regional logistics hubs have sufficient facilities, manpower, and equipment for basic operations. However, the 1st and 2nd Divisions currently lack supplies. The 1st Division lacks weapons training and proficiency due to a lack of ammunition. Three of four RGBs in the 2nd Division are awaiting the transfer of their operating budgets from the 70s Forces to the MoPA, which has kept them from receiving supplies.</p> <p>The 1st and 2nd Divisions are receiving weapons and equipment and the 3rd and 4th Divisions are expected to receive weapons and equipment soon. However, some units, mostly those coming from the 70s Forces, do not have the food or fuel that they need. Coalition advisors seek to help the MoPA restart basic logistics operations from two recently established regional logistics hubs. Advisors will shift focus to inventory, accountability, standard operating procedures, and maintenance management.</p>
<b>Information Operations</b>	<p>Through its social media pages, the General Directorate for Media and National Awareness publishes information and imagery about counter-ISIS operations conducted by MoPA units and joint operations with ISF. However, the directorate does not conduct information activities before or during an ongoing operation. Instead, Peshmerga <b>information activities focus on cooperation with Coalition forces and training, and not on counter-ISIS operations</b>. The MoPA continues to focus on structural and financial changes associated with information operations. Integrating information operations into Peshmerga military doctrine is likely to take some time.</p> <p>Coalition advisors have <b>not observed an ability to conduct counter-messaging</b> or information dominance.</p> <p>The Coalition advised the Directorate on creating an assessment process for reviewing its own information activities. Advisors also provided advice on how to link information operations into operations planning.</p>

Source: CJTF-OIR, response to DoD OIG request for information, 24.4 OIR 036 and 24.4 OIR 037, 9/11/2024.

## The MoPOC Appears to Be Sidelined

CJTF-OIR reported that the MoPA's Operations Command (MoPOC) "seems to have been sidelined in comparison to earlier ambitions."<sup>221</sup> Last quarter, CJTF-OIR reported that the MoPA was finalizing an operating concept to clarify the role of the Operations Command in mission planning.<sup>222</sup> This quarter, CJTF-OIR reported that the MoPOC has no role in the upcoming command post exercise of the 3rd and 4th Divisions.<sup>223</sup>

CJTF-OIR said that the MoPOC, which it described as a key structure of the MoPA reorganization, is waiting for KRG endorsement and that its development as an operations center has stalled in favor of divisional and other operations centers.<sup>224</sup> The MoPA's lack of investment in the establishment of the MoPOC weakens its capability and authority to plan operations, forcing it to rely on other echelons to plan and conduct operations.<sup>225</sup>

CJTF-OIR reported that partisan politics and a lack of Peshmerga personnel training and capability hinder Coalition advising efforts on mission planning. Removing the influence of partisan factions has proven most challenging and impacts decision-making, CJTF-OIR said. Decisions are made by a select few who hold influential positions, which CJTF-OIR reported undermines efforts to coordinate among staff directorates. Very few MoPA personnel have the requisite training and experience to be effective, CJTF-OIR said.<sup>226</sup>

**CJTF-OIR reported that partisan politics and a lack of Peshmerga personnel training and capability hinder Coalition advising efforts on mission planning.**

## SYRIAN PARTNER FORCES

To achieve its mission, CJTF-OIR works with vetted local partner forces in Syria, including the Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) in northeastern Syria and the Syrian Free Army (SFA), further south along Syria's southeastern border.<sup>227</sup> (See page 29.)

The increased threats against U.S. and Coalition forces from Iran-aligned militias and proxies since October 2023 have drawn assets from the counter-ISIS fight. Despite these threats, the Coalition's advisory mission has continued, CJTF-OIR said. U.S. and Coalition forces have put practices in place to adapt to the changing circumstances and USCENTCOM prioritized additional assets to support OIR force protection, mitigating the effects on partner support activities.<sup>228</sup>

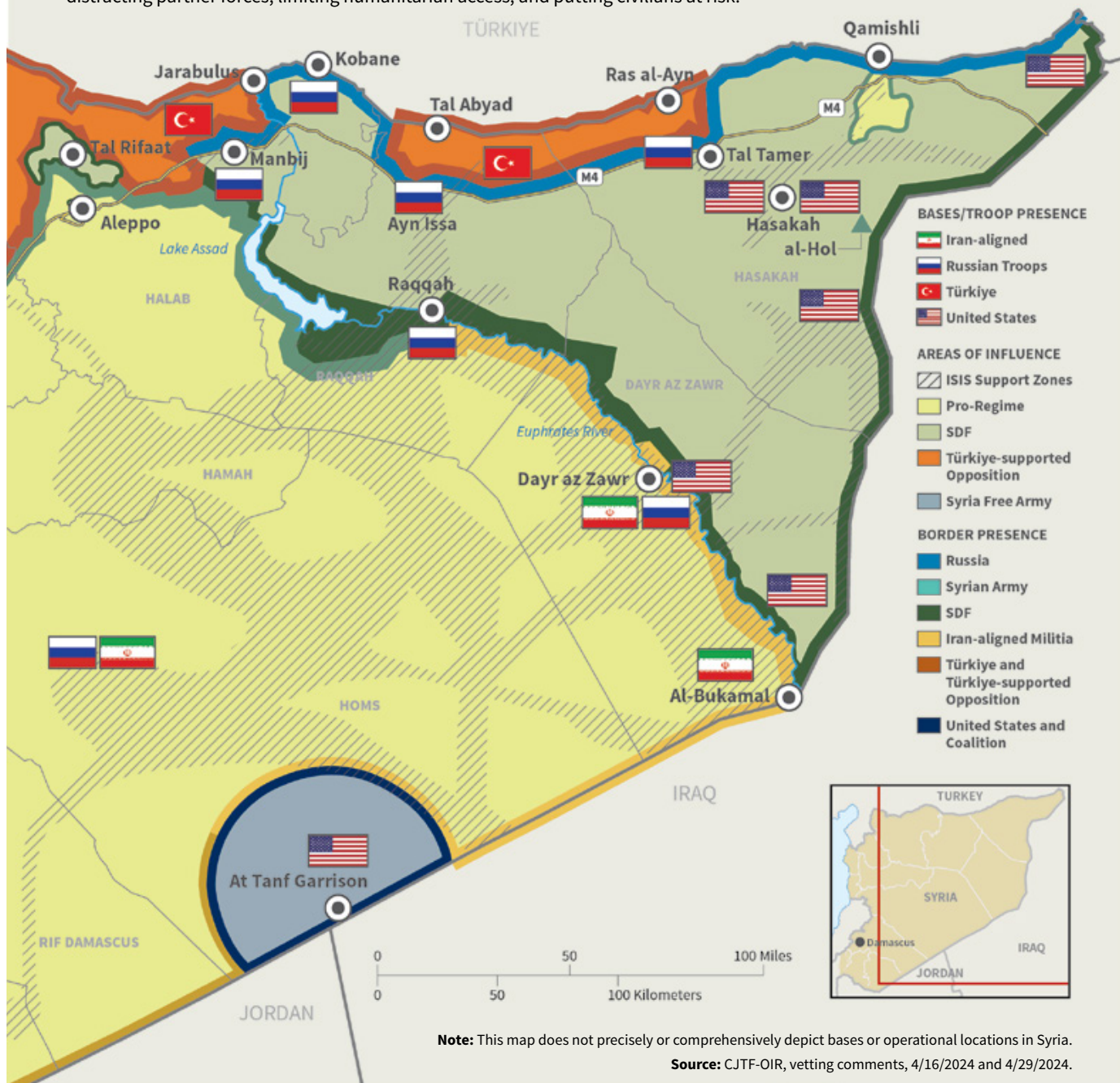
U.S. forces also conducted airstrikes in areas of Syria outside of SDF control. According to a USCENTCOM news release, two U.S. airstrikes in September killed 37 operatives, including multiple senior ISIS leaders and members of al-Qaeda affiliate Hurras al-Din. On September 24, a U.S. airstrike in northwestern Syria killed nine people, including the senior Hurras al-Din leader responsible for overseeing operations from Syria.<sup>229</sup> On September 16, U.S. forces struck a remote hideout in central Syria, killing at least 28 ISIS operatives, including at least four senior leaders.<sup>230</sup> On August 23, a U.S. strike killed another Hurras al-Din senior leader in northwestern Syria.<sup>231</sup>



# OPERATING ENVIRONMENT IN SYRIA

Coalition forces in Syria operate in a complex political and military environment. Violence associated with the Syrian civil war, which began in 2011, has destabilized the country and led to the deaths of more than half a million people. Today, the Syrian regime, with military support from Russia and Iran, controls most of the country.

The Coalition supports partner forces in areas not under regime control, including the Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) in the northeast and the Syrian Free Army near the At Tanf Garrison. Russian and pro-regime forces also operate in these areas. Türkiye exercises influence over territory along the northern border and conducts cross-border operations that often target SDF forces. All of these rival forces operate in close proximity, often restricting Coalition and partner force movement, distracting partner forces, limiting humanitarian access, and putting civilians at risk.



## Iran Increases Support to Tribal Factions in Worsening Clashes with SDF

Iran-aligned militias continued to provide training and logistical support to tribal groups and factions in northeastern Syria during the quarter, leading to escalating attacks targeting the SDF.<sup>232</sup> CJTF-OIR reported that while the tensions had little impact on Coalition training and advising to partner forces, the fighting led the partner forces to shift their attention to self-defense and away from the OIR campaign.<sup>233</sup>

The most intense fighting between the SDF and tribal factions occurred in early August, when several hundred anti-SDF tribal forces, backed by the Syrian regime and Iran-aligned militias, crossed the Euphrates River in a surprise attack on an SDF stronghold.<sup>234</sup> CJTF-OIR reported that there were many casualties, including civilian casualties on both sides.<sup>235</sup> The SDF accused the Syrian regime and factional forces of deliberately targeting civilian homes.<sup>236</sup>

Support for Arab tribal militias operating in southern portions of the Middle Euphrates River Valley is now a focal point for Iran's strategic interests.<sup>237</sup> The DIA said that the Syrian regime and Iran view the attacks against the SDF as a tool to pressure the United States in northeastern Syria and destabilize security in Dayr az Zawr province.<sup>238</sup> According to a think tank analysis cited by CJTF-OIR, Iran's principal objective is to maintain a strategic land corridor running from Iraq through Syria to Lebanon in order to transport weapons and equipment to Iran-aligned groups, including Hezbollah.<sup>239</sup> Iran is leveraging the tribes' desire to challenge the SDF and the Democratic Autonomous Administration of North and East Syria (DAANES).<sup>240</sup>

**U.S. Army Soldiers dismount from the back of a pickup truck to load a partner force casualty onto a Blackhawk helicopter in northeastern Syria. (U.S. Army photo)**



**One analyst assessed that DAANES shortfalls in oil revenue are likely due to increased Turkish attacks against SDF-controlled oil infrastructure last year.**

During the quarter, observers reported that Iran-aligned militias transported weapons and supplies to tribal groups, specifically in Abu Kamal and the Aqidat tribes in Dayr az Zawr.<sup>241</sup> Iran is also spreading its influence through cultural activity. This includes offering strategic guidance to the tribal factions for them to engage in community and governance capacities and opening cultural centers in Dayr az Zawr.<sup>242</sup>

### **Clashes Undermine Public Support for the SDF, DAANES**

CJTF-OIR reported that while the SDF ultimately repelled the August attacks, there is “no guarantee that the SDF can hold the line indefinitely.”<sup>243</sup> The SDF will need to maintain support of the majority of Arab residents east of the river, CJTF-OIR said.<sup>244</sup> That task could prove challenging for the SDF and the DAANES, which are struggling to provide security, governance, and public services to the population. State reported that public access to essential services is inconsistent across northeastern Syria due to conflict and degradation of infrastructure. Significant service gaps can increase public grievances and make underserved populations more vulnerable to recruitment by violent extremist organizations, according to State.<sup>245</sup>

Based on DAANES budget documents, the DAANES has little ability to expand funding for services or infrastructure. According to the documents published in June, the 2024 annual budget for the DAANES described \$1.06 billion in expenditures against only \$670 million in revenue for a region of roughly 4.6 million people.<sup>246</sup> Of that budget 31.2 percent is allocated to the SDF, 13.2 percent for salaries and wages of other public servants, and 28.8 percent for grain purchases and debt repayment for grain. Nearly 60 percent of DAANES revenue is derived from the sale of oil, with nearly 18 percent coming from customs duties.<sup>247</sup> One analyst assessed that DAANES shortfalls in oil revenue are likely due to increased Turkish attacks against SDF-controlled oil infrastructure last year.<sup>248</sup>

The battle for public support is also playing out in the information environment. CJTF-OIR cited one instance during the quarter in which a tribal force commander aligned with the Syrian regime and linked to attacks on U.S. forces accused the SDF of committing a massacre in Dayr az Zawr. The SDF accused Syrian regime forces and Iranian factions of committing the massacre.<sup>249</sup> State reported that it works to counter extremist and Iran-aligned disinformation through support for independent media and public department communications.<sup>250</sup>

Coalition forces continued to conduct joint patrols with the SDF, including in areas near where the clashes occurred. CJTF-OIR noted that local news media continued to focus on coverage of the clashes and elevated tensions in the area with limited coverage of the SDF, DAANES, and Coalition force efforts.<sup>251</sup>

### **SDF Releases Detainees Who Qualify Under Amnesty Law**

The SDF and the DAANES have taken some steps to address tribal grievances. On July 17, the DAANES issued an amnesty law which provides relief for some individuals convicted of crimes under the region’s counterterrorism laws.<sup>252</sup> The law was a response to the request of tribal leaders and sheikhs during the “Second National Unity Forum for Syrian Clans and

Components” held on May 25.<sup>253</sup> Under the law, Syrian detainees could be eligible for a reduced sentence or released.<sup>254</sup>

Individuals do not qualify under the law if they were leaders of terrorist organizations or convicted of violent crimes.<sup>255</sup> The amnesties also include reductions of life sentences to 15 years.<sup>256</sup> Individuals over the age of 75 and who are terminally ill will be pardoned, according to a news report. The law also stipulates that individuals in hiding for crimes under the law have 60 days to surrender themselves.<sup>257</sup>

On July 22, the SDF general command met with representatives from Arab and Kurdish communities and clans from northern and eastern Syria to discuss implementation of the amnesty law, according to the SDF.<sup>258</sup> Following the meeting, the SDF reported that it started releasing detainees in detention centers in Raqqah, Hasakah, and Dayr az Zawr provinces.<sup>259</sup> Another report said detainees were also released from the Manbij central facility.<sup>260</sup> On September 1, the SDF released 50 ISIS-linked detainees from the Ghuwayran detention facility in Hasakah.<sup>261</sup>

According to State, the DAANES announced that 1,100 Syrian detainees will be released under the new law.<sup>262</sup> State and CJTF-OIR reported that by early September, the SDF had released approximately 750 Syrian detainees who had already served half their sentences.<sup>263</sup> All released detainees returned to areas held by the SDF.<sup>264</sup> The SDF will release another 400 Syrians when they have completed half their sentences, likely by the end of the calendar year.<sup>265</sup>

## ISIS, Militias Exploit SDF’s Focus on Tribal Tensions and Turkish Attacks

CJTF-OIR reported that ISIS continued to leverage increased freedom of movement in SDF-controlled areas resulting from the SDF’s increased attention on tribal tensions and attacks by the Turkish military. These conditions allowed ISIS to conduct an extensive campaign targeting the oil sector in northeastern Syria, including attacks on oil truck drivers, storage facilities, extraction infrastructure and oil investors to raise funds.<sup>266</sup>

An SDF spokesperson stated that a restructured ISIS leadership and improved financial system to support its operations have allowed ISIS to bolster the number of fighters, build an operations center, and improve a media system to promote its activities.<sup>267</sup>

CJTF-OIR assessed that if tensions in the Middle Euphrates River Valley escalated to the point where the SDF was unable to execute counter-ISIS operations, ISIS would almost certainly attempt to exploit the security vacuum to reconstitute its forces and finances.<sup>268</sup> Iran-aligned militia groups also exploited tensions in the Middle Euphrates River Valley by recruiting from those who opposed the SDF, offering them monetary compensation, training, and military equipment, CJTF-OIR said.<sup>269</sup>

**On September 1, the SDF released 50 ISIS-linked detainees from the Ghuwayran detention facility in Hasakah.**

## Results of SDF Counter-ISIS Operations

### PARTNERED OPERATIONS

During the quarter, the SDF conducted 18 counter-ISIS operations in partnership with Coalition forces, compared with 27 partnered operations the previous quarter.<sup>270</sup> The SDF reported that it captured ISIS operatives, including ISIS leaders who planned numerous attacks, an IED expert, and fighters who were involved in attacks.<sup>271</sup>

- **September 1:** Captured Khaled Ahmed al-Dandal, an ISIS facilitator accused of helping ISIS fighters escape detention. He is suspected of involvement in the August escape of five ISIS fighters from the Raqqah Detention Facility.<sup>272</sup>
- **September 9:** Captured two ISIS operatives in Dayr az Zawr and in Hasakah provinces during simultaneous operations. The SDF said that it had monitored the movement of ISIS operatives as they entered northeastern Syria from Turkish-occupied areas and participated in motorcycle bombings and other attacks in Hasakah.<sup>273</sup>
- **September 14:** Killed a cell of four ISIS terrorists, including two leaders who were responsible for assassinations in the region, in a village near Raqqah City and captured multiple weapons and electronic devices.<sup>274</sup>

### OTHER SDF OPERATIONS

- **July 12:** Arrested Ahmad Mahoud al-Qarsha, the leader of an ISIS-led manufacturing cell in Dayr az Zawr.<sup>275</sup>
- **July 13:** Captured Khalid Hasan Salum, an ISIS economic cell leader for Dayr az Zawr.<sup>276</sup>
- **July and August:** Killed five ISIS terrorists including three high-ranking ISIS leaders and a key planner and participant in the January 2022 attack on the Ghuwayran Detention Facility in Hasakah province. The SDF also captured 34 ISIS operatives.<sup>277</sup>
- **September 10:** Captured five in large-scale SDF raids in the Raqqah countryside in response to increased ISIS activities in the area.<sup>278</sup>

## Development of SDF Detention Guards and Displacement Camp Security Forces Remains Slow

A key priority for the Coalition is the ongoing development of an SDF guard force for the more than 20 SDF detention facilities holding approximately 9,000 ISIS detainees, and security forces for displaced persons camps, particularly the al-Hol camp, where ISIS supporters, many among the families of ISIS fighters, remained active.<sup>279</sup>

Development of guard forces remained slow. Direct training of SDF guard forces during the quarter involved a single course training SDF trainers, which enables the SDF to train its own guard forces.<sup>280</sup> CJTF-OIR said that a second course was paused due to SDF concern with screening requirements.<sup>281</sup>

The physical security of SDF detention facilities varied depending on the facility.<sup>282</sup> All of the facilities require improvements, with several needing immediate upgrades to reduce the risk of attack or breakout attempts by ISIS detainees.<sup>283</sup>

USCENTCOM reported that freeing ISIS fighters from detention remained a primary ISIS objective as it would fuel the group’s revival. U.S. forces, in coordination with the SDF, worked to mitigate this threat, USCENTCOM said.<sup>284</sup>

On August 29, five detainees (two Russians, two Afghans, and a Libyan) escaped from the Raqqah Detention Facility. USCENTCOM reported that the SDF recaptured two escapees: Imam Abdulwahed Akhwan (Russian) and Muhammad Noh Muhammad (Libyan). The search continued for the three who remained at large: Timor Talbrken Abdash (Russian) and Shuab Muhammad al-Abdli and Atal Khaled Zar (both Afghans).<sup>285</sup>

In addition to detention guard training, during the quarter, Coalition forces focused on training the SDF on more specialized skills, including medical skills, marksmanship, and tactical ground maneuvers.<sup>286</sup> CJTF-OIR reported that there was no change in SDF capabilities during the quarter. The SDF can execute operations up to the battalion level and maintain counterterrorism pressure on ISIS independently.<sup>287</sup>

**USCENTCOM reported that freeing ISIS fighters from detention remained a primary ISIS objective as it would fuel the group’s revival.**

## Rukban Humanitarian Crisis Improves; Supply Stranglehold Remains

CJTF-OIR forces continued to partner with the SFA in the deconfliction zone surrounding the At Tanf Garrison, where their main focus as part of sustaining suppression of ISIS was a humanitarian assistance mission to address the crisis at the nearby Rukban camp. Approximately 8,000 people, including SFA personnel and their extended families live at the Rukban camp.<sup>288</sup> Last quarter, the camp experienced an increase in humanitarian needs due to a de-facto blockade imposed by pro-regime forces.<sup>289</sup>

CJTF-OIR reported that the humanitarian situation at the Rukban Camp is “greatly improved” from last quarter, even though the blockade continued.<sup>290</sup> The SFA partnered with Coalition forces to distribute aid inside the camp.<sup>291</sup> The distributions went smoothly, without violence or other disruptions.<sup>292</sup> CJTF-OIR said that the supplies were sufficient to feed the Rukban population for a couple of months.<sup>293</sup>

On July 9, a U.S.-based non-governmental organization (NGO) announced the arrival of five volunteer doctors to Rukban as part of a humanitarian initiative launched in June 2023 to provide medical care to Rukban residents.<sup>294</sup> This visit marked the first time during the current crisis that a multi-specialist medical delegation was able to access the camp.<sup>295</sup> The delegation identified an urgent need for ongoing medical aid because of the rising number of critical cases among civilians in the camp.<sup>296</sup>

CJTF-OIR said that, because access to Rukban has been blocked, the camp must rely on smuggling routes from Syrian regime territory to receive most of its supplies.<sup>297</sup> While goods entering the deconfliction zone around At Tanf have always been subject to extortion fees, forces aligned with the Syrian regime have placed extremely high tariffs on supplies, resulting in the inability of most Rukban residents to purchase necessary goods.<sup>298</sup> CJTF-OIR reported that all open routes into Rukban are now controlled by pro-regime forces; there are no alternate supply routes available.<sup>299</sup>

**Coalition forces also partnered with the SFA on 53 joint patrols and combat outpost training, 10 mortar fires classes, 5 medical training classes, and 9 “Commander’s Academy” sessions during the quarter, CJTF-OIR reported.**

CJTF-OIR reported that to prevent a recurrence of the humanitarian crisis, Jordan must allow aid to enter through the nearby border crossing between Jordan and Syria that Jordan has kept closed.<sup>300</sup> In 2016 Jordan, which had already taken in 600,000 Syrian refugees fleeing the Syrian civil war, closed its border crossing with Syria near Rukban following a truck bomb explosion at the crossing.<sup>301</sup>

The SFA supports the OIR campaign by maintaining a presence in the deconfliction zone to counter ISIS forces and provide stability to the region. CJTF-OIR said that, without the SFA, ISIS would have a larger safe haven to train and prepare for operations against the Coalition, and malign actors would have freedom of movement in Syria’s southern border with Jordan.<sup>302</sup> If the supply crisis in Rukban worsens, families could flee the region back to regime territory and some SFA members would leave to find better lives for their families, CJTF-OIR assessed.<sup>303</sup>

## The SFA Resumes Training Operations and Patrols

Coalition forces conducted a variety of training and partnered operations with the SFA in the deconfliction zone surrounding the At Tanf Garrison during the quarter.<sup>304</sup> Coalition forces also partnered with the SFA on 53 joint patrols and combat outpost training, 10 mortar fires classes, 5 medical training classes, and 9 “Commander’s Academy” sessions during the quarter, CJTF-OIR reported.<sup>305</sup>

Coalition training and joint patrols with the SFA slowed during the humanitarian mission, but a Coalition reserve unit was able to conduct some patrolling operations with the SFA.<sup>306</sup> Following the completion of the humanitarian mission, full-time patrolling and training events with the SFA resumed, CJTF-OIR said.<sup>307</sup>

CJTF-OIR reported that the SFA is well-equipped with weapons and ammunition and maintains numerous combat outposts throughout the deconfliction zone.<sup>308</sup> The SFA is a capable, combat-ready fighting force that has proven its abilities through years of conflict in Syria.<sup>309</sup> However, without Coalition support, the SFA would not be able to sustain its position in the deconfliction zone, CJTF-OIR said.<sup>310</sup>

The SFA is highly dependent on Coalition forces for all classes of supply.<sup>311</sup> While the SFA could sustain a short fight with current arms and ammunition, it completely relies on Coalition logistics for all its needs.<sup>312</sup> CJTF-OIR stated that without the Coalition, the local economy would fall apart and the SFA would not have sufficient access to food, fuel, or equipment.<sup>313</sup>

During the quarter, the Coalition continued to increase supplies to the SFA, including through CTEF.<sup>314</sup> CJTF-OIR said that last quarter it provided the SFA with a number of vehicles, giving the force greater mobility around the deconfliction zone.<sup>315</sup> Coalition forces continue to seek ways to improve SFA communications systems which are essential in area defense.<sup>316</sup> During the quarter, Coalition forces worked to increase the number of personnel screened for entry into the SFA, which was approved for an increase in its current numbers.<sup>317</sup>



**U.S. Army Soldiers train alongside soldiers of the Syrian Free Army, in southern Syria. (U.S. Army photo)**

Coalition training of the SFA during the quarter focused on combat outpost defense, with training sessions on engagement area development and shaping the battlefield to influence the enemy's movement into the desired engagement location.<sup>318</sup> Coalition forces also began a 6-week course on mortar fire for the SFA.<sup>319</sup> CJTF-OIR said that the course will focus mainly on direct lay operations, in which the target is visible and no forward observer is needed.<sup>320</sup>

CJTF-OIR said that during the quarter there were a number of command changes at SFA combat outposts, similar to a Coalition army rotating platoon or company commanders, resulting in the need for Coalition forces to train the new commanders. CJTF-OIR said that there were no major issues with the commander changes, and noted that one SFA company commander who recognized that some of his new combat outpost commanders were struggling with some concepts, held his own training sessions with these soldiers. CJTF-OIR said it was encouraged by the demonstration of leadership and participation from the SFA company commander.<sup>321</sup>

## OPERATING ENVIRONMENT

### **Russian Forces Conduct Ineffectual Counter-ISIS Operations, Violate Air Safety Deconfliction Protocols**

As ISIS operations increased in the Central Syrian Desert during the quarter, elements of the Syrian 4th Division, with Russian air support, conducted combined operations targeting ISIS cells, the DIA said, based on media and observer reporting.<sup>322</sup> However, despite these efforts, the DIA said that Syrian regime military operations had no discernable impact on



**CJTF-OIR reported that although the number of overflight violations decreased compared to last quarter, the violations were more egregious in nature.**

ISIS during the quarter.<sup>323</sup> Similarly, the DIA reported that limited Russian airstrikes on likely ISIS hideouts in the Central Syrian Desert, along with a continued strike campaign targeting anti-regime militants in the northwestern Idlib province, had little discernable effect on those groups' ability to operate in Syria.<sup>324</sup>

Russian aircraft continued to violate established deconfliction protocols with Coalition forces in Syria during the quarter. CJTF-OIR reported that although the number of overflight violations decreased compared to last quarter, the violations were more egregious in nature.<sup>325</sup>

CJTF-OIR said that Coalition commanders routinely take additional force protection measures when Russian military aircraft overfly their area of operations to ensure the safety of the forces. Coalition forces did not face any threats or perceived interference from Russian forces during the quarter. Most instances involving Russian aircraft Rule-of-Three violations (which establish minimum horizontal and vertical altitude distances between aircraft and maximum time one aircraft tracks another, and require notification of intent to violate these rules) were deemed safe but unprofessional, CJTF-OIR reported.<sup>326</sup>

The Coalition presence in the vicinity of the Euphrates River was a point of contention between Russian and Coalition forces during the quarter. Coalition operations in the area are not included in the 2019 bilateral Deconfliction Protocols, CJTF-OIR reported. Russia portrays Coalition activities in the area as grounds for its own unprofessional actions in the form of overflights into the east zone of the Euphrates River and violating distance safety practices when flying near Coalition aircraft.<sup>327</sup>

CJTF-OIR noted that most Russian overflights of Coalition forces are “posturing.”<sup>328</sup> Russia likes to portray itself as the “sole guarantor of stability” in Syria and sees its efforts to deny the Coalition freedom of movement outside of eastern Syria as part of its role of protecting Syrian sovereignty.<sup>329</sup> During the quarter, Russia portrayed Coalition forces in Syria as perpetrating near-daily air violations, conducting unsafe air activities, creating dangerous “preconditions” for incidents, and accused the Coalition of intentionally destabilizing Syria.<sup>330</sup>

## **Turkish Forces Expand Operations Against the PKK in Iraq and Syria**

During the quarter, Türkiye continued operations in northern Iraq and northern Syria to remove the Kurdistan Workers Party (PKK) from its southern border. The PKK is a U.S.-designated terrorist organization that has conducted a decades-long campaign of attacks in Türkiye and against Turkish forces outside the country. CJTF-OIR reported that since 2022, Türkiye has expanded its troop presence in northern Iraq. During its summer 2024 campaign, Turkish troops advanced 15 kilometers into the IKR.<sup>331</sup>

Turkish strikes and raids on PKK positions have caused civilian casualties, civilian displacement, and destruction to agricultural land, according to media reports.<sup>332</sup> CJTF-OIR reported that the Turkish strikes have been a major cause of brushfires, which have been exacerbated by high temperatures and dry conditions. The fires have burned swathes of agricultural land and pushed residents from their homes.<sup>333</sup> CJTF-OIR assessed that Turkish operations have had a limited impact on the Peshmerga's ability to conduct counter-ISIS operations.<sup>334</sup>

## Turkish-Iraqi Diplomacy Continues Despite Expanded Turkish Strikes

While Turkish operations in Iraq have raised concerns about violations of Iraqi sovereign territory and airspace, they have not disrupted diplomatic discussions between Türkiye and Iraq.<sup>335</sup> On August 29, Iraqi air defenses shot down a Turkish drone over the northern city of Kirkuk. According to media reporting, the Iraqi air force stated that the drone was issued a warning “according to protocol” and then shot down by air defenses. The incident did not appear to undermine the new agreements. A Turkish Foreign Ministry spokesman said the countries were continuing to work together to fight terrorism.<sup>336</sup>

In early September, according to a news report, a member of the Iraqi parliament’s Security and Defense Committee said Türkiye’s military presence was a violation of Iraq’s sovereignty, and their military troop presence in Iraq exceeded that of the United States.<sup>337</sup> Political and security discussions between Iraq and Türkiye continued during the quarter continued.<sup>338</sup> On August 15, the foreign ministers of Türkiye and Iraq participated in a fourth round of the Türkiye-Iraq High Level Security Mechanism. The countries agreed to a historic memorandum of understanding to boost counterterrorism operations between the two nations, which included the establishment of a joint military coordination center for Türkiye and Iraq in Baghdad, and a joint training center at the formerly Turkish military base in Bashiqa, near Mosul, in northwestern Iraq.<sup>339</sup>

During a news conference with his Turkish counterpart in Ankara, the Iraqi foreign minister said the Bashiqa base will be transformed into an Iraq-Türkiye training camp and the Iraqi Army will maintain responsibility for it.<sup>340</sup> CJTF-OIR noted that under the agreement, Türkiye handed control of the base over to Iraq.<sup>341</sup> The Bashiqa base was established by Türkiye in northern Iraq in 2015 to train Sunni forces in their fight against ISIS, according to a media report.<sup>342</sup> Since the territorial defeat of ISIS in 2019, the base had become a target of both the PKK and Iran-aligned militias, with attacks peaking in 2021 and 2022.<sup>343</sup>

Iraq also decided to close the operations of three political parties with ties to the PKK, as part of its burgeoning relations with Türkiye. CJTF-OIR reported that the new cooperation between Türkiye and Iraq is narrowing the PKK’s space in the country.<sup>344</sup>

According to State, it is too early to assess the significance of the new memorandum of understanding. However, some experts speculate it will heighten competition and potentially raise tensions between Türkiye and Iran, who both have competing economic and security interests in northern Iraq. State assessed that by strengthening security and Iraq’s economic partnership with Türkiye, the agreement could offer Iraqi political leaders a counterbalance to nationalist calls for Türkiye’s departure.<sup>345</sup>

**While Turkish operations in Iraq have raised concerns about violations of Iraqi sovereign territory and airspace, they have not disrupted diplomatic discussions between Türkiye and Iraq.**



USAID Syria Livelihoods Program Women's Committee grants support entrepreneurship training for women returnees and host community women in Dayr az Zawr. (USAID photo)

## DISPLACED PERSONS

Displaced persons camps in northeastern Syria, particularly the al-Hol and Roj camps, remained a focus for the U.S. Government during the quarter.<sup>346</sup> State, USAID, and the DoD coordinate closely on efforts related to al-Hol.<sup>347</sup> The DoD and State provide targeted training and support to security forces operating in and around al-Hol.<sup>348</sup> State and USAID continue to support organizations providing life-saving assistance at the al-Hol and Roj camps, including camp coordination and camp management services, water and sanitation, distribution of non-food items and food, child protection, and education.<sup>349</sup>

During the quarter, a water crisis and overcrowding affected al-Hol residents' ability to maintain hygiene and increased the risk of contracting water-borne diseases, according to the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA).<sup>350</sup> Residents often went days without enough clean water for drinking, cooking, or washing, and the high temperatures made the situation even worse.<sup>351</sup>

As of the end of the quarter, there were approximately 41,000 people at al-Hol (most of them children) and 2,600 at Roj.<sup>352</sup> (See Figure 3.) Since May 2021, the U.S. Government and international partners have repatriated 9,535 Iraqis and 720 third-country nationals from the camp.<sup>353</sup> The U.S. Government has worked with local governance stakeholders and civil society in northeastern Syria to support the return of more than 1,000 Syrians to home or host communities in Manbij, Raqqah, and Dayr az Zawr since January 2023.<sup>354</sup>

Figure 3.  
**Demographics of al-Hol and Roj Displaced Persons Camps**

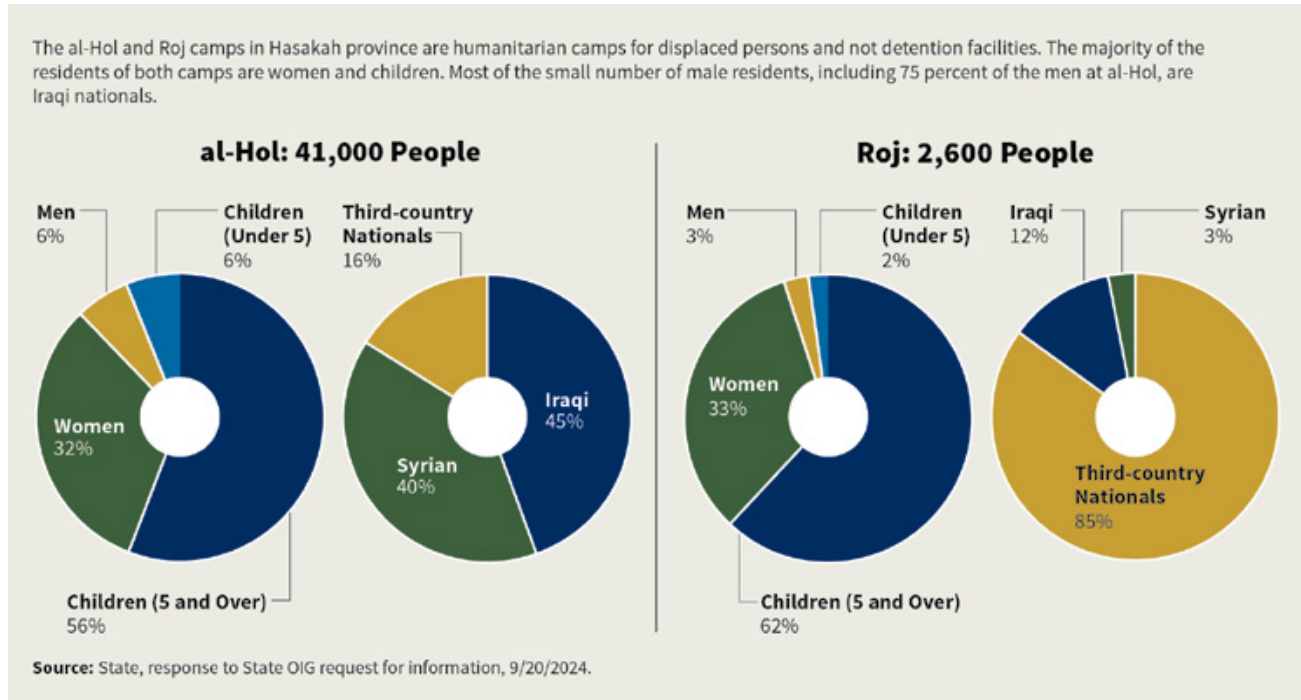
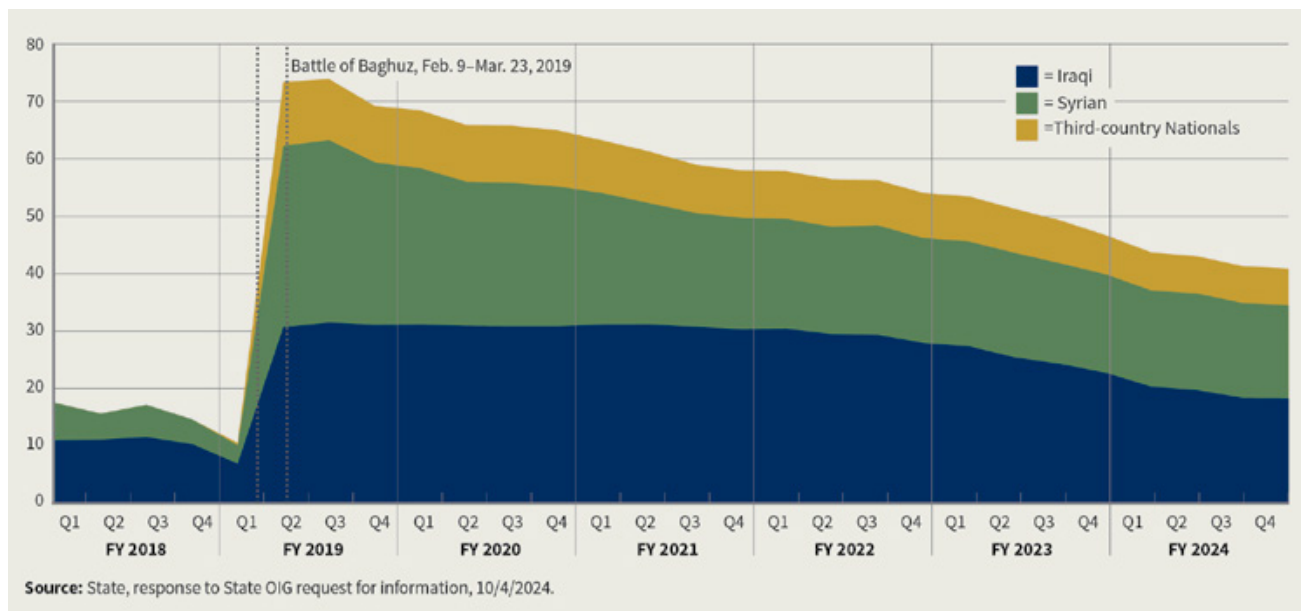


Figure 4.  
**Changes Over Time in al-Hol Population, in Thousands**



**During the quarter, one group of Syrians (347 individuals) left al-Hol.**

## **SDF Halts Repatriation of Iraqis**

The U.S. Government continued to prioritize the reintegration and repatriation of displaced persons, including non-Syrian ISIS-associated individuals, because the return of these individuals to their countries and communities of origin is integral to securing the enduring defeat of ISIS.<sup>355</sup>

However, a dispute between the SDF and the Iraqi government halted the repatriation of Iraqis, including those from al-Hol, throughout the quarter.<sup>356</sup> CJTF-OIR reported that the SDF paused the repatriations in June to protest the Iraqi government detention and treatment of convicted SDF-aligned smugglers who operate in the border area between Iraq and northeastern Syria. The Iraqi justice system has since commuted their death sentences to a sentence of life in prison.<sup>357</sup> CJTF-OIR said that the SDF was unwilling to resume repatriation operations and detainee transfers until a resolution was reached. The SDF made no exceptions, even for repatriations requested for humanitarian or dire medical purposes.<sup>358</sup>

During the quarter, CJTF-OIR met with Iraqi and SDF officials to try to resolve the situation. This included engagement with Iraqi government officials in Baghdad and in subordinate-level meetings with Iraqi and SDF representatives of an Iraqi-SDF fusion cell in northeastern Syria that provides tactical oversight to repatriation missions.<sup>359</sup> Multiple U.S. and U.K. government agencies engaged counterparties to urge a speedy resolution and the resumption of repatriations.<sup>360</sup>

## **Repatriations of Syrians, Third-country Nationals Continue**

During the quarter, one group of Syrians (347 individuals) left al-Hol.<sup>361</sup> In addition, the United States facilitated the repatriation of 22 third-country nationals from Syrian displaced persons camps and 20 foreign terrorist fighters from detention Syrian facilities to their home countries.<sup>362</sup> Russia also repatriated 20 Russian children from the camp.<sup>363</sup> (See Table 2.)

CJTF-OIR reported that its team in Erbil is responsible for supporting all U.S.-coordinated repatriations of third-country nationals out of al-Hol. This team liaises with State, the SDF, and representatives of the country of origin to enable the physical repatriation of families back to their home counties. The team does not support Syrian returns out of al-Hol.<sup>364</sup>

CJTF-OIR reported that in a recent staff assessment at al-Hol in July, the civil affairs director and his staff spoke with camp administration, camp management, and SDF security forces to understand key concerns within al-Hol, how these issues significantly affect repatriation efforts, and what, if anything, the Coalition can assist with to support repatriation efforts.<sup>365</sup>

State led the U.S. Government's efforts to encourage the countries of origin to repatriate, rehabilitate, reintegrate, and, where appropriate, prosecute their nationals in detention facilities, as well as efforts to coordinate and facilitate repatriations on a case-by-case basis.<sup>366</sup>

Table 2.

**Repatriations and Returns from al-Hol During the Quarter**

<b>Syria</b>	One group of 347 individuals
<b>Iraq</b>	None
<b>Kyrgyz Republic</b>	In July, the Kyrgyz Republic repatriated 22 women and children from al-Hol and Roj.
<b>Russia</b>	On July 7, the Russian Children’s Commission repatriated 20 children from the ages of 5 to 15 from Roj camp to Russia. Russia worked directly with DAANES and the SDF to repatriate the children; the United States was not involved.

**Sources:** CJTF-OIR, response to DoD OIG request for information, 24.4 OIR 058, 9/11/2024; State, press statement, “United States Applauds the Kyrgyz Republic’s Repatriation of Women and Children from Northeast Syria,” 7/19/2024; Shaam, “The Russian Children’s Commission Announces the Repatriation of 20 Children from Refugee Camps in Syria. And Thanks SDF,” 7/7/2024; State, response to State OIG request for information, 9/13/2024.

**SECURITY****ISIS Continues Efforts to Exploit al-Hol Residents**

CJTF-OIR reported that during the quarter, ISIS almost certainly continued to seek to extend its influence and recruit in al-Hol, particularly from among the third-country nationals and adolescents held in the foreigners’ annex of the camp.<sup>367</sup> The annex, which holds residents who are not from Iraq or Syria, including some wives and children of former ISIS fighters, continued to be a focal point for ISIS radicalization. Some women in the annex maintain connections with ISIS outside the camp, allowing them to continue membership in the group, receive financial support, and recruit for ISIS from within the camp.<sup>368</sup>

Another major security concern in al-Hol is the ongoing smuggling of money, materials, weapons, and people into and out of the camp, because this can facilitate connection with ISIS cells outside the camp and increases the risk of violence within the camp.<sup>369</sup> CJTF-OIR stated that the SDF largely restricts freedom of movement in the camp but due to the camp’s large size and limited security presence, the annex’s security perimeter is porous and conducive to smuggling.<sup>370</sup>

State reported that it has seen a significant decrease in violence in the camp over the past 2 years.<sup>371</sup> Similarly, CJTF-OIR did not report any recent incidents of ISIS violence in the camp during the quarter.<sup>372</sup> There have been no reported murders in the camp since late 2022. The last known incident related to al-Hol occurred in June, when ISIS conducted a vehicle-borne improvised explosive device attack on an SDF checkpoint in northeastern Syria, which it later claimed was part of its campaign of revenge for women in al-Hol.<sup>373</sup>

**The SDF-aligned Internal Security Forces in Syria have approximately 1,000 guards tasked with providing security to residents, humanitarian organizations, and the camp administration at al-Hol.**

## Security Challenges in al-Hol Persist

The DoD, with support from State, continued to provide targeted training and support to security forces operating in and around the al-Hol camp to improve their ability to provide security inside the camp.<sup>374</sup>

The SDF-aligned Internal Security Forces in Syria (Asayish) have approximately 1,000 guards tasked with providing security to residents, humanitarian organizations, and the camp administration at al-Hol.<sup>375</sup> CJTF-OIR said that the Asayish are able to conduct security operations, intelligence collection, and limited riot control. Minimally equipped with small arms, radios and trucks, the Asayish conduct roving patrols daily through much of the camp, but they lack persistent access to the foreigner's annex.<sup>376</sup>

CJTF-OIR said that security challenges inside the camp continue to stem from the Asayish's inability to limit smuggling.<sup>377</sup> NGOs, vendors, contractors, and employees enter the camp daily but due to a lack of resources, there is limited scrutiny.<sup>378</sup> The camp's main entrance lacks adequate access control point infrastructure to mitigate the smuggling of weapons, phones, personnel, or other contraband into or out of the camp, and the lack of metal detectors limits the Asayish's ability to find weapons.<sup>379</sup> In addition, there are no barriers to create lanes and separate vehicle types. The Asayish possess only one mirror for searching the undercarriage of vehicles and lack armored vehicles, night vision devices, metal detectors, and non-lethal crowd-control armament.<sup>380</sup>

CJTF-OIR said that Coalition efforts continue to address the security and humanitarian vulnerabilities through guard training programs and provisions of materiel. CJTF-OIR assessed that these efforts, combined with repatriation operations, will reduce security challenges.<sup>381</sup>

However, SDF security operations continued to disrupt humanitarian efforts. In July, the World Health Organization suspended its operations for one day due to an SDF security operation.<sup>382</sup> As part of its al-Hol duties, CJTF-OIR liaises directly with NGOs and the camp management of al-Hol on a weekly basis, providing an avenue for wider issues and concerns to be raised.<sup>383</sup>

CJTF-OIR stated that despite these resource shortfalls, the Asayish is committed to improving the security situation at al-Hol while minimizing disruptions to essential services or exacerbating existing humanitarian issues.<sup>384</sup> The Asayish continues to work with the SDF to disrupt ISIS activity and networks in the camp that threaten the camp's residents.<sup>385</sup> A Syrian war monitor reported in late July and early August that Asayish security units conducted a series of raids in al-Hol, including an August 1 operation in which seven people were detained on suspicion of planning to carry out attacks in the camp.<sup>386</sup>

## USAID OIG: al-Hol Camp Administration Diverted Bread from Residents

During the quarter, the USAID OIG published a summary of its investigation into allegations that the al-Hol camp administration diverted bread provided under a USAID award from the intended beneficiaries at al-Hol and instead used it themselves.<sup>387</sup>

The USAID OIG found that from February 2019 to March 2023, the camp administration set security restrictions at al-Hol that prevented the USAID implementer from physically accessing beneficiaries. The implementer was forced to rely on the Asayish and the camp administration to deliver bread within the inaccessible areas of the camp, which created the opportunity for the initial diversion. Once the awardee received full access to the camp, the Asayish and the camp administration continued to divert the USAID-funded bread.<sup>388</sup>

## REINTEGRATION OF SYRIANS

### United States Announces Additional Humanitarian Aid for Refugees and Displaced Persons

On September 26, the United States announced nearly \$535 million in additional U.S. humanitarian assistance for the Syrian people.<sup>389</sup> The assistance included \$235 million through State's Bureau of Population, Refugees, and Migration (PRM) and \$300 million through USAID's Bureau for Humanitarian Assistance (BHA).<sup>390</sup>

The assistance will help international organization partners to meet the needs of the most vulnerable refugees, internally displaced persons, and host communities across Syria and for Syrian refugees in surrounding countries.<sup>391</sup> These needs include emergency shelter; food assistance; access to healthcare and education; water, sanitation, and hygiene supplies; support for livelihoods; and protection for those in situations of vulnerability.<sup>392</sup> The assistance also provides support to international and local non-governmental organizations that provide life-saving support and protection to host communities, refugees, and asylum seekers.<sup>393</sup> The United States urged other donors to fill the significant funding gaps so partners can continue to meet the needs of the most vulnerable.<sup>394</sup>

### USAID's Case Management System Supports Reintegration of al-Hol Returnees in Syria

Syrian returnees from al-Hol face similar challenges as other residents in northeastern Syria, which include limited access to essential services (such as electricity, water, health, and education), inflated prices for food and non-food items, limited access to jobs, and a difficult security environment.<sup>395</sup> Returnees reportedly face the stigma of ISIS association.<sup>396</sup>

USAID operates a case management system for Syrian returnees from al-Hol that monitors how they are adjusting and how their needs evolve.<sup>397</sup> USAID-funded coordinators conduct



**According to a USAID rapid assessment, 10,138 Syrians left al-Hol from May 2019 until the case management system was launched in September 2023.**

periodic basic needs assessments and generate information that USAID also uses to measure reintegration and progress toward U.S. objectives.<sup>398</sup>

Departures from the al Hol camp have been occurring since 2019.<sup>399</sup> According to a USAID rapid assessment, 10,138 Syrians left al-Hol from May 2019 until the case management system was launched in September 2023.<sup>400</sup> Since then, roughly 908 Syrians have left the camp in three tranches to Raqqah and Dayr az Zawr.<sup>401</sup> All returnees from al-Hol are voluntary and are vetted by Internal Security Forces.<sup>402</sup> However, the vetting process is not always transparent, and reasons for someone’s rejection are not always clear, USAID said.<sup>403</sup>

Syrian returnees have made approximately 3,000 requests for service through the case management system since it began (there can be multiple requests/referrals per returnee).<sup>404</sup> On average, a coordinator visits each returnee family every 2 weeks.<sup>405</sup> USAID currently tracks 80 Syrian families who have returned to Raqqah and 99 families in Dayr az Zawr through the case management system.<sup>406</sup>

USAID reported that there is currently no plan to support Syrians in al-Hol to regime-controlled areas if that is their community of origin.<sup>407</sup> Many of the families remaining in al-Hol are not originally from northeastern Syria and SDF-controlled areas.<sup>408</sup> As a result, it will become more difficult to repatriate future returnees<sup>409</sup>

The greatest needs for returnees are education, livelihoods, security, and food (including food security).<sup>410</sup> Each returnee has a tribal sponsor, identified by the Asayish forces, and a “family sponsor” in the locations that they return to, according to USAID.<sup>411</sup>

USAID and its implementers collaborate with 27 organizations based in northeastern Syria to also assist returnees in Raqqah, Manbij, Tabqa, and Dayr az Zawr to obtain official documents and receive other legal support.<sup>412</sup> Returnees have participated in livelihood training and have received other services, but finding secure jobs is a challenge for both residents and returnees.<sup>413</sup> In Raqqah, more than 90 returnee children enrolled in school, but, in Dayr az Zawr, issues with identity documentation limit enrollment.<sup>414</sup>

USAID said that its case management system is capable of surging to process more returnees.<sup>415</sup> Service providers and international support organizations in Raqqah have indicated that they can accept referrals and provide services to more returnees.<sup>416</sup> In Dayr az Zawr, providing adequate services to a surge of returnees may prove challenging, as there are not as many organizations available to accept referrals and provide services.<sup>417</sup>

## **Syrians Return to Dayr az Zawr**

In July, 82 Syrian families (347 individuals) departed al-Hol to communities in Dayr az Zawr, according to USAID.<sup>418</sup> Some later left Dayr az Zawr for Syrian regime-controlled areas or Raqqah.<sup>419</sup>

Al-Hol camp administration and the Asayish identified returnees and organized their return, with support from State.<sup>420</sup> All returns from al-Hol are voluntary and are vetted by local security forces.<sup>421</sup> However, the vetting process does not appear very transparent, USAID said.<sup>422</sup>

Clashes between the Syrian regime (and affiliated forces) and the SDF in Dayr az Zawr August limited the mobility of USAID implementer program staff and delayed support to al-Hol returnees.<sup>423</sup> Following clashes, the SDF heightened security measures for several days with additional checkpoints and curfews.<sup>424</sup> Implementer programs were limited during this time, but normal operations resumed and no substantial delays in implementation of programs were noted by USAID.<sup>425</sup>

State's Information Management Unit provided support to register and verify returnees inside al-Hol and facilitated the return journey, before passing collected information over to USAID's case management system, which conducted intake assessments upon returnees' arrival to the Dayr az Zawr receiving area.<sup>426</sup> As of early September, USAID's case management system had received 329 referrals for the July returnee group, mainly for non-food items, livelihoods, and food.<sup>427</sup>

As part of the case management system development project, USAID supported a training activity and documentation policies for members of the Dayr az Zawr Civil Council Social Affairs and Labor Committee and their Community Care Center.<sup>428</sup> The training covered case management principles, data collection methods, and strategic planning.<sup>429</sup> In addition, eight members of the group visited their counterparts in the Raqqah Civil Council to learn more about their experiences working with returnees.<sup>430</sup>

USAID said it also supported local authorities' efforts to restore grid network electricity to a public wheat mill in Dayr az Zawr in order to reduce operating costs for the mill and strengthen food security by making flour from the mill available for public bakeries for host communities and returnees.<sup>431</sup> USAID is also planning support for safe drinking water and irrigation pumping to further support host communities and returnees.<sup>432</sup> USAID also prepared transitional shelters (apartments) in Dayr az Zawr during the cold months.<sup>433</sup> However, since the departure was delayed for months, by the time returnees arrived it was warmer and returnees had family or host homes to go to, so transitional shelter was not required by or provided to the returnees.<sup>434</sup>

State also supported civil society-led dialogue engaging Asayish leadership on the issue of documentation for returnees and supported the Dayr az Zawr Civil Council to improve the civil documentation process for returnees. State also supported the Asayish Returnees Safety and Security Teams, which check in with returnee families to ensure their safety and access to appropriate resources.<sup>435</sup>

In addition, the Syria Recovery Trust Fund launched a project that aims to revitalize communities, improve living conditions, and reintegrating returnees and IDPs by promoting resilience, stability, and empowering women.<sup>436</sup> (See Table 3.) As of September, the project was 90 percent completed. A total of 287 families returning from al-Hol and 630 families from the host community benefitted from the project.<sup>437</sup> Approximately 30 percent of the project beneficiaries are women.<sup>438</sup> USAID reported providing \$5 million to the Syria Recovery Trust Fund in FY 2024 to contribute to its efforts.<sup>439</sup>

**Clashes between the Syrian regime (and affiliated forces) and the SDF in Dayr az Zawr August limited the mobility of USAID implementer program staff and delayed support to al-Hol returnees.**

Table 3.

**Syria Recovery Trust Fund Activities in Dayr az Zawr, as of September 2024**

- Renovated 917 houses.
- Rehabilitated civil, water, sanitation, and electrical works.
- Provided 800 garden kits used to establish small-scale agricultural yards in 254 of the rehabilitated houses for returnees and 546 for host community members.
- Provided 50 hydroponic unit systems installed in 6 returnee households and 44 host community households.
- Supported cash-for-work activities (such as cleaning streets and schools) for at least 1,074 individuals, including 315 returnees and 759 host community members.

**Source:** Syria Recovery Trust Fund, “Resilience in Action: SRTF Initiative Achieves Key Milestones in Community and Returnees’ Reintegration and Support,” 9/4/2024.

**State and USAID Continue Support for Returnees in Raqqah**

USAID continued to support local efforts to facilitate the reintegration of Syrian returnees. The Raqqah Civil Council Social Affairs and Labor Committee and Community Care Center continued to train staff and document policies and procedures.<sup>440</sup> The Syrian Center for Studies and Dialogue, completed a 4-month training on principles of case management training, which included approaches, case simulations, data collection and documentation methodology, legal and ethical considerations, continuous learning and reflection skills, and a train-the-trainer element.<sup>441</sup> Local authorities also attended training on internal and external communications, beneficiary engagement, and data privacy.<sup>442</sup>

In addition, a local civil society organization completed temporary housing support for returnee families, providing 22 transitional shelters (apartments in Raqqah city) for approximately 6 months.<sup>443</sup> The organization developed customized “exit strategy plans” with returnee families.<sup>444</sup> The plans included considerations for livelihoods and income generation activities, in addition to the identification of housing.<sup>445</sup> Returnees also attended training to improve skills and find jobs.<sup>446</sup> The families vacated the temporary shelters, implemented their plans, and found more suitable, longer-term housing, USAID said.

**REPATRIATION AND REINTEGRATION OF IRAQIS****IDPs Continue to Face Barriers to Return**

Repatriated Iraqis from al-Hol first arrive at the Jeddah 1 transit camp in Iraq, where, according to State, conditions are better than those at al-Hol. At Jeddah 1, families have access to essential services while they await security clearance to proceed to their destination.<sup>447</sup>

As of the end of the quarter, State said there was sufficient physical and service capacity at Jeddah 1 to immediately hold 2,000 additional individuals. The total physical capacity of the camp is 11,000 individuals.<sup>448</sup> CJTF-OIR is currently looking at divestment options to increase the capacity of Jeddah 1.<sup>449</sup>

Table 4.

**Displacement in Iraq During the Quarter**

- Approximately **1 million** internally displaced (as of April).
- **90 percent** are in the IKR and the neighboring provinces of Ninewa, Kirkuk, Salah al-Din, Diyala, and Anbar. (As of April.)
- **21 IDP camps** in the IKR were operational and sheltering more than **134,000 people**. (As of September.)
- Approximately **24,500 families** (147,000 people) were displaced across 430 locations in 12 provinces due to climate factors. (As of June.)
- More than **270,000 Syrian refugees** were in Iraq. (As of September.)

**Sources:** USAID BHA, response to USAID OIG request for information, 9/13/2024; USAID, "Iraq-Complex Emergency Fact Sheet #3," 9/30/2024.

Iraqis returning from camps in Syria, including al-Hol, continued to encounter obstacles to their onward integration. These challenges include a lack of civil documentation and an inconsistent distribution of grants to aid in their return to Iraq, as well as limited access to public services such as education and healthcare.<sup>450</sup> Iraqi IDPs also reportedly face harassment at checkpoints after departure, and issues with safety, basic services, and finding work where they ultimately settle.<sup>451</sup> Relief agencies urged the Iraqi government to ensure that IDPs are able to return to Iraq in a manner that is dignified, safe, and voluntary.<sup>452</sup>

**The United States Supports IDPs in Camps and Communities of Return**

According to the UN International Organization for Migration (IOM), more than 9,500 Iraqis have been repatriated from al-Hol through Jeddah 1 since repatriations began in May 2021, with nearly 7,300 Iraqis resettled as of September 4.<sup>453</sup> More than 2,200 individuals continued to reside at Jeddah 1.<sup>454</sup>

State PRM and USAID BHA continued to fund services in Iraqi IDP camps and their communities of return.<sup>455</sup> (See Table 4.)

USAID stabilization programming in Iraq works with vulnerable host communities to absorb returnees, including those from al-Hol.<sup>456</sup> USAID reported that support is provided through programs it already has in place in specific geographic areas, and through engagement with community leaders that have identified returnees in their communities.<sup>457</sup> USAID is not specifically notified of individual Iraqi returnees or households after they depart Jeddah 1 and a system to assess the reintegration of repatriated Iraqis into host communities has not been developed yet.<sup>458</sup> According to USAID, its activities that support the reintegration of al-Hol returnees in Iraq are still in the early stages and it is too early to assess the impact of these activities.<sup>459</sup> USAID plans to launch a case management system in October for targeted beneficiaries who are processed through and depart Jeddah 1.<sup>460</sup> This case management system aims to track, manage, and coordinate returnee needs, including education, medical, legal, and livelihood support.<sup>461</sup>

Table 5.

**U.S.-funded Services at Iraqi IDP Camps and Areas of Return**

Jeddah 1	Area of Return
Food	Protection services
Water, sanitation, and hygiene services	Livelihoods assistance
Protection support, including child protection case management, parenting programs, and gender-based violence prevention and response	Legal services
Mental health services	Mental health and psychosocial support
Legal services to support access to civil documentation	Housing and shelter support
Vocational training, education, and early childhood development	Community health support
Primary health services and subsidized referrals to secondary health care	Community and social cohesion support
A visitor's center that connects residents to family and community members	Post-return referrals
Staff training	
Infrastructure and maintenance	

**Source:** State, response to State OIG request for information, 9/20/2024; USAID BHA, response to USAID OIG request for information, 09/13/2024.

USAID's case management approach is a six-step process from intake to case closure.<sup>462</sup> State said that, in coordination with USAID, it plans to build an all-encompassing case management system that is implemented by IOM, with a focus on Jeddah 1 camp, that will coordinate case management system efforts with other implementers and service providers in communities of return.<sup>463</sup>

The Iraqi communities receiving al-Hol returnees have not fully recovered from the conflict, and often have limited or poor quality services and infrastructure, such as health care, education, water, and electricity.<sup>464</sup> The presence of additional families in these areas stress these basic resources and services, creating tensions between host communities and returnees from al-Hol.<sup>465</sup> Iraqis returning from al-Hol often lack the official documentation required to enroll children in schools and to access employment opportunities and social welfare benefits.<sup>466</sup> Many returnees have been secondarily displaced to the peripheral neighborhoods around Mosul, where they are renting low-cost housing in informal settlements.<sup>467</sup> Returnees, especially female-headed households, lack opportunities for employment and have limited household incomes.<sup>468</sup> In some cases, returnees are stigmatized in host communities due to their perceived affiliation with ISIS.<sup>469</sup>

USAID reported that it is addressing these issues by rehabilitating and supporting improvements to basic services and infrastructure in vulnerable host communities to meet the needs of the entire community, including returnees.<sup>470</sup> A USAID-supported program identified some returnee families who needed civil documentation in order to enroll their children in schools and referred those cases to international NGOs for additional assistance.<sup>471</sup>

State PRM supports IOM’s Facilitated Voluntary Movement program, which aims to advance sustainable solutions for IDPs by enhancing their informed decision-making about their preferred life options. The program offers support throughout all stages of the durable solutions pathway, both in areas of displacement and in areas of return or relocation. IOM conducts information sessions to explain the registration process and assistance provided in areas of destination, and to inform them about the facilitated voluntary return and relocation program.<sup>472</sup>

For IDPs in informal sites and camps, State PRM said IOM facilitates interactive visits, known as “come-and-tell” visits, where local authorities from the areas of IDP origin or destination come to meet with households and provide information about the areas of origin or relocation, enabling households to make well-informed decisions. IOM also supports “go-and-see” visits to their communities of origin, allowing households to directly observe the conditions in their potential return or relocation areas and to meet with local authorities. To support the families’ departure and immediate needs, IOM provides cash grants for transportation, departure, and reinstallation. IOM also provides information and referrals for a range of services in areas of return, such as mental health support, protection, legal services and civil documentation support, livelihoods and employment opportunities, health services, and housing assistance.<sup>473</sup>

**In Sulaimaniyah, closure of two camps has resulted in the departure of 2,106 internally displaced families.**

## Future of IDP Camps Uncertain

USAID reported that the United Nations continued to work with the Iraqi government and the Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG) to finalize the “Roadmap for Accelerating the Implementation of the National Plan to Resolve Displacement in Iraq.”<sup>474</sup> This roadmap outlines priorities and actions to address displacement and includes a framework for monitoring progress.<sup>475</sup>

Although the Iraqi Ministry of Migration and Displacement (MoMD) reversed an earlier decision to close all IDP camps in the IKR by June 30, it remained unclear when the MoMD might proceed with the planned camp closures or how a continued reduction in services might impact camp residents.<sup>476</sup> Additionally, it remained uncertain whether IDP households were still eligible for grants of \$1,100 to \$3,000 to aid them in returning to their places of origin, which USAID reported had caused considerable distress among IDPs.<sup>477</sup>

In Sulaimaniyah, closure of two camps has resulted in the departure of 2,106 internally displaced families.<sup>478</sup> IDPs have also departed camps in Ninewa and Erbil provinces.<sup>479</sup> The IOM reported that Iraqi authorities planned to consolidate two other camps due to land ownership issues, although the timeline for consolidation was not yet known.<sup>480</sup>

Camp closures could worsen vulnerability by decreasing access to essential services like health care, shelter, food, water, and protection that are more available in camps.<sup>481</sup> Iraqis who leave camps often go to informal settlements, where electricity is intermittent or costly and education and health services are inconsistent.<sup>482</sup>

At the same time, the Iraqi government’s capacity to provide services, particularly food and water, to IDPs remained inconsistent and unreliable.<sup>483</sup> Shortages of fuel, normally supplied by the Ministry of Transportation, affected electricity and water pumping.<sup>484</sup> As Iraqi government

service provision in the camps is expected to remain inconsistent, implementing partners will continue to fill critical gaps in areas such as water, sanitation, and hygiene; food; and primary healthcare.<sup>485</sup>

The Iraqi government has provided grants to returning IDP families of approximately four million Iraqi dinar (\$3,050), though not every family has received a grant. Many of the families were also supported by State PRM partners, the UN Refugee Agency, and IOM, particularly through IOM's Facilitated Voluntary Movement program.<sup>486</sup>

The planned transition of services currently provided by donor-funded humanitarian organizations to the Iraqi government and civil society organizations was not completed by the end of the quarter and is unlikely to occur in the near future.<sup>487</sup>

The Iraqi government's promised efforts to address barriers to return remain unresolved, including the rebuilding of destroyed settlements, exclusion from social welfare programs, issues related to terrorism charges and tribal rejection, and the lack of civil documentation.<sup>488</sup> This situation creates stress for vulnerable camp residents and complicates the transfer of services.<sup>489</sup> Additionally, ongoing budget disputes between the KRG and Iraqi government have delayed the handover of humanitarian activities, particularly in the protection and water, sanitation, and hygiene sectors, due to non-payment of civil servants' salaries.<sup>490</sup> Without stable funding, the transition process is at a standstill despite USAID partners' readiness to hand over services.<sup>491</sup>



**Beneficiaries at Jeddah 1 shop for food as part of a UN-supported unconditional food activity funded by USAID BHA. (USAID photo)**







USAID's partner, the Syria Civil Defence (White Helmets), has been on the front lines in northwestern Syria, providing crucial life-saving services. (USAID photo)

## BROADER U.S. POLICY GOALS

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# BROADER U.S. POLICY GOALS

## INTRODUCTION

The U.S. Government pursues policy objectives in Iraq and Syria that, while not directly part of the OIR mission, are integral to the success of the campaign. (See Table 6.) The U.S. Government, primarily through State and USAID, remains the largest donor for stabilization and humanitarian programming in Iraq and Syria.<sup>492</sup> Other U.S. Government agencies—including the Department of the Treasury (Treasury), the Department of Justice (DoJ), and the Department of Homeland Security (DHS)—contribute to the counter-ISIS mission through sanctions, prosecutions, and technical assistance programs.

## DIPLOMACY

### IRAQ

#### Iraq Continues Diplomatic Outreach to Neighbors

Iraqi Prime Minister Mohammed Shia al-Sudani held side discussions with world leaders while attending the 79th United Nations General Assembly session in September.<sup>493</sup> The Prime Minister met with Jordanian King Abdullah II bin al-Hussein to discuss Israel's

Table 6.

#### U.S. Policy Goals in Iraq and Syria

Iraq	Syria
Promote inclusive, economic reform	A stable Syria governed through a Syrian-led political solution, with accountability and justice for the Syrian people
Support an Iraqi democracy that delivers for all citizens	Support efforts to achieve the enduring defeat of ISIS and al-Qaeda
Support a resilient Iraqi Kurdistan Region (IKR)	Reduce violence, including through the observance of ceasefires across the country
Bolster Iraqi independence and advance regional integration	Reduce suffering by improving humanitarian access throughout Syria
	Promote accountability for atrocities and the protection of and respect for human rights
	Advance an inclusive, Syrian-led political solution to the Syrian conflict in line with UN Security Council Resolution (UNSCR) 2254

Source: State, "Integrated Country Strategy-Iraq," 5/30/2023; State, response to State OIG request for information, 4/8/2024.



**USAID has implemented more than 132 activities in Sinjar to improve infrastructure, reduce stressors on public services, foster community collaboration, preserve Yazidi culture and heritage, and empower civil society organizations, women, and youth. (USAID photo)**

continued air and ground assault in Gaza and airstrikes in Lebanon. Prime Minister al-Sudani also met with Somalian Prime Minister Hamza Abdi Barre for follow-on discussions on topics agreed to during Barre’s visit to Baghdad in July. Foreign Affairs Minister Fuad Hussein held a sideline discussion with his counterpart from Sudan, Hussein Awad Ali, to discuss regional security issues, especially the attacks in Lebanon.<sup>494</sup>

On July 22, Prime Minister al-Sudani chaired the Second Baghdad International Conference on Drug Control, which included ministers of interior from Saudi Arabia, Jordan, Kuwait, Iran, Türkiye, Syria, Lebanon, and Egypt.<sup>495</sup> The Prime Minister warned that drug trafficking and consumption was a threat to regional stability, likening the illegal drug trade to terrorists who seek “to destabilize our security.”<sup>496</sup> Attendees issued a statement emphasizing “the need for unified regional and international efforts to enhance regional and global security to counter the spread and trafficking of drugs and psychotropic substances.”<sup>497</sup>

The United Nations lauded Iraq for taking “bold steps” to combat illegal drug use over the past 2 years by reorganizing the Ministry of Interior, improving coordination internally and with member states, and expanding treatment facilities.<sup>498</sup> The UN Office of Drugs and Crime presented its report, “Drug Trafficking Dynamics Across Iraq and the Middle East (2019-2023),” which found that Iraq and neighboring countries experienced a sharp increase in the trafficking and use of captagon. In 2023, Iraq seized captagon tablets valued at an estimated \$144 million.<sup>499</sup>

State reported that in late August, Prime Minister al-Sudani also took tangible steps to improve relations with other Middle Eastern countries.<sup>500</sup> According to media reports, Prime Minister al-Sudani met with Egyptian President Abdel Fattah El-Sisi and Egyptian

business leaders during a visit to Egypt in August. Prime Minister al-Sudani emphasized the potential for regional economic integration, including investment opportunities arising from the Iraq Development Road, a project to connect Asia with Europe by establishing a transportation network from southern Iraq to Turkey.<sup>501</sup> Egyptian business leaders expressed interest in investing in Iraq's transportation, pharmaceuticals, healthcare, infrastructure, and construction sectors.<sup>502</sup>

Prime Minister al-Sudani also met with Tunisian Prime Minister Kamel Madouri in Tunis, where the Prime Minister reviewed their countries' joint plans for oil, transportation, tourism, and other sectors. This meeting was followed by another in Istanbul among trade ministers from Iraq, Türkiye, Qatar, and the United Arab Emirates to discuss the Development Road.<sup>503</sup>

## Iran's New President Visits Iraq

In September, Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian visited Iraq in his first foreign trip since taking office in July. The visit underscored the importance Iran places on its security and economic relations with Iraq, according to news reports.<sup>504</sup> He met with Iraqi Prime Minister al-Sudani, whose government is considered to have close ties to Iran. However, open source analysts have assessed that since taking office nearly 2 years ago, the Prime Minister has prioritized improving relations with Iraq's Arab neighbors over Iran.<sup>505</sup> Prime Minister al-Sudani and President Pezeshkian discussed expanding Iran's trade ties with Iraq, media reports said.<sup>506</sup>

President Pezeshkian met with his Iraqi counterpart, President Abdul Latif Rashid, who is a Kurd and member of the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (PUK). In a demonstration of the bond between the two countries, the presidents conducted their meeting in Kurdish, which was widely reported in social media.<sup>507</sup>

Following his meetings in Baghdad, President Pezeshkian traveled to the Iraqi Kurdistan Region (IKR) becoming the first sitting Iranian president to visit the region, according to media reports.<sup>508</sup> The trip was significant as it followed a security agreement between Iraq and Iran signed in March 2023 after Iran's Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps launched air raids against bases of Iranian Kurdish rebel groups in the IKR.<sup>509</sup> Iraq agreed to disarm Iranian Kurdish opposition groups and remove them from Iraq's border with Iran.<sup>510</sup>

President Pezeshkian met with high-ranking Kurdish officials in both Erbil and Sulaymaniyah, which Iraq analysts said underscored Iran's recognition of the power balance between the two largest Kurdish political parties, the Kurdistan Democratic Party and the PUK.<sup>511</sup>

Significantly, Esmail Qaani, commander of Iran's Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps-Quds Force, arrived in Baghdad on September 19, his fourth visit to Iraq this year, according to media reports. Qaani reportedly met with leaders of Iran-aligned militia groups, including Hadi al-Amiri, head of the Badr organization; Qais al-Khazali, Secretary General of Asaib Ahl al-Haq; and Hussein al-Hamidawi, commander of Kata'ib Hezbollah, among others.<sup>512</sup>

**In September, Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian visited Iraq in his first foreign trip since taking office in July.**

## Hamas Opens Offices in Baghdad

According to a news report, the Iraqi government quietly permitted Hamas and the Houthis to open offices in Baghdad in June after their presence was limited to representational visits for years. The report said that the Iraqi government denied the presence of the office, but photos of the office had circulated on social media.<sup>513</sup> The Houthis have had an office in Iraq since 2011, though this is their first office in Baghdad.<sup>514</sup>

In response, State publicly commented that Hamas and the Houthis are terrorist organizations and allowing them to operate in Iraq “only risks increasing the number of armed groups that have an interest in using violence to undermine the Government of Iraq’s goals for stability, sovereignty, and economic growth.”<sup>515</sup>

According to media reports, Hamas, a Sunni group, is represented in Baghdad by Mouhammed al-Hafi, a member of the Hamas bureau for Arab and Islamic Relations. The media report stated Kata’ib Hezbollah provides security for al-Hafi, who has met with Shia organizations associated with the Axis of Resistance and Sunni groups that embrace Hamas’ Muslim Brotherhood philosophy.<sup>516</sup>

The Houthis in Baghdad are reportedly represented by Abu Idris al-Sharafi, who has been meeting with Iran-aligned groups, such as Qais al-Khazali, head of Asa’ib Ahl al-Haq, and tribal leaders in rural southern Iraq.<sup>517</sup>

## Mission Iraq Activities and Threats

During the quarter, the threat environment for Mission Iraq (the U.S. Embassy in Baghdad, Baghdad Diplomatic Support Center, and the Consulate General in Erbil) remained largely stable. Political advancements include sessions of the U.S.-Iraq Higher Military Commission and Joint Security Cooperation Dialogue and, most recently, the public announcement of the agreement on the transition plan for the Coalition’s military mission in Iraq. Regional events of the Israel-Hamas war and the Israel-Hezbollah conflict raised the potential of local threats. Iran-aligned militias attacked the Baghdad Diplomatic Support Center on September 10 and October 1.<sup>518</sup>

Travel within Baghdad and throughout Iraq remained largely unchanged this past quarter. Mission Iraq’s access and ability to conduct security details at the Ministry of Defense (MoD) was negatively impacted following an incident involving Minister of Defense Thabit al-Abbasi during his travel to the U.S.-Iraq Joint Security Cooperation Dialogue (JSCD). For more than 1 month, the MoD restricted the access of security personnel at the venue.<sup>519</sup>

Meanwhile, after delays due to a personnel drawdown, which triggered a partial suspension of work due to the ordered departure, the contractor remobilized the workforce to continue construction of the New Consulate Compound in Erbil. Pre-commissioning activities began in August and commissioning of the utility systems will begin by the end of December. As of August, the compound was 96 percent complete with occupancy expected in July 2025.<sup>520</sup>

## SYRIA

### U.S. Government Continues to Pursue Political Solution in Syria

State reported that the United States continued to support UNSCR 2254 and the efforts of UN Special Envoy for Syria Geir Pedersen to advance a political resolution to the Syrian conflict, including through convening the Constitutional Committee in Geneva.<sup>521</sup> State said that the United States will not express support for efforts to normalize or rehabilitate Bashar al-Assad; lift sanctions on Syria; nor change the U.S. position opposing reconstruction in Syria until there is irreversible progress toward a political solution.<sup>522</sup>

State reported that the Syrian regime remains the main obstacle to achieving progress toward a political solution to the conflict and at the Constitutional Committee.<sup>523</sup> State called on the Syrian regime to cooperate with the political process and empower its delegates to negotiate in good faith for the Syrian people as outlined in UNSCR 2254.<sup>524</sup>

The United States continues to support the UNSCR 2254 process through State-managed programming that provides technical expertise and capacity building for select Constitutional Committee members.<sup>525</sup>

Meanwhile, on September 17, State Under Secretary for Political Affairs John Bass met with Turkish Deputy Foreign Minister Nuh Yilmaz in Ankara and discussed developments in the region, including Syria.<sup>526</sup> State said that discussions between the United States and Türkiye focused on the need to fight terrorism in all its forms and manifestations, expand cooperation against terrorism, and address related networks engaged in organized crime and drug trafficking.<sup>527</sup> Additionally, State reported that the United States and Türkiye have a shared interest in ensuring the enduring defeat of ISIS in Syria and Iraq.<sup>528</sup>

### Multiple Countries Relaunch Diplomatic Missions to Syria

In July, press reports indicated that Italy appointed an ambassador to Syria, the first G7 nation to reportedly do so since the start of Syria's civil war in 2011.<sup>529</sup> Italy withdrew all staff from its embassy in Damascus and suspended diplomatic activity in Syria in 2012.<sup>530</sup> Italy and seven other European Union (EU) states—Austria, Croatia, Cyprus, Czechia, Greece, Slovakia, and Slovenia—sent a letter to the bloc's foreign policy chief, Josep Borrell, asking the EU to play a more active role in Syria.<sup>531</sup> The foreign ministers of those states also said that their countries were ready to restore diplomatic ties with the Syrian government.<sup>532</sup> There are six EU embassies currently open in Damascus: Bulgaria, Cyprus, Czechia, Greece, Hungary, and Romania.<sup>533</sup> None of Italy's G7 partners—the United States, Japan, United Kingdom, Canada, France, and Germany—have returned their ambassadors to Syria.<sup>534</sup> Additionally, on September 9, Saudi Arabia reopened its embassy in Damascus.<sup>535</sup> The resumption of diplomatic ties follows the reopening of Syria's embassy in Saudi Arabia earlier this year.<sup>536</sup>

State reported that the United States will not normalize diplomatic relations with the Syrian regime absent authentic progress toward a lasting political solution to the ongoing conflict.<sup>537</sup> State said that the United States shares many of the same goals as U.S. partners engaging the

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**In August, the Arab Federation of Chambers of Maritime Navigation, which is also part of the Arab League, reinstated the membership of the Syrian government after suspending it for more than 12 years.**

Syrian regime, including expanding humanitarian access, ensuring ISIS and other terrorist actors cannot resurge, accounting for the unjustly detained and the missing, creating safe conditions for eventual refugee returns, and countering illicit captagon drug trafficking, and continues to urge these partners to press for progress on these objectives in support of the Syrian people.<sup>538</sup> State said that the United States believes that stability in Syria can only be achieved through a political process that includes the Syrian opposition and represents the will of all Syrians.<sup>539</sup> The United States is committed to working with allies, partners, and the United Nations to achieve a durable political solution in line with UNSCR 2254.<sup>540</sup>

### **Two Organizations Affiliated with the Arab League Reinstates Syrian Membership**

In July, the General Assembly of the Arab Civil Aviation Organization, an affiliate of the Arab League that seeks to strengthen cooperation in, coordination with, and modernization among Arab countries in civil aviation, elected the Syrian government as a member of the Air Safety Committee following a 12-year suspension.<sup>541</sup>

In August, the Arab Federation of Chambers of Maritime Navigation, which is also part of the Arab League, reinstated the membership of the Syrian government after suspending it for more than 12 years.<sup>542</sup>

## **DEMOCRACY, GOVERNANCE, AND ACCOUNTABILITY**

In Iraq, the U.S. Government encourages the development of an inclusive and responsive democracy that is transparent, accountable, and committed to international norms.<sup>543</sup> In areas of Syria liberated from ISIS, the U.S. Government seeks to strengthen local governance and civil society to maintain security, meet community needs, and ensure ISIS cannot reconstitute.<sup>544</sup>

### **IRAQ**

#### **Iraq Plans First Population Census in 27 Years**

Iraq is preparing for its first general population census in 27 years on November 20. According to media reports, the census questionnaire will have an economic focus, which supporters claim will provide invaluable data necessary for rebuilding Iraq's public services. The Deputy Chairman of the Parliamentary Strategic Planning Committee noted that the census form excludes questions related to ethnicity and affiliation with religious sects in order to provide neutrality. Critics have challenged the government's decision not to include religion and ethnicity in the questionnaire, alleging that excluding the information will allow the continuation of "fictitious estimates" of Iraq's religious and ethnic makeup, which form the basis of Iraq's apportionment of political positions, including cabinet ministers.<sup>545</sup>

State assessed that it was too soon to speculate on how the outcomes of the census could affect the resolution of disputed territories in northern Iraq that are claimed by the federal government and the Kurdistan Regional Government.<sup>546</sup>

State said that the Iraqi government plans to enforce a nationwide curfew on November 20 and 21 to facilitate the census. According to State, Iraq’s Ministry of Planning told local media that preparations for the census were progressing swiftly across all provinces but that “there might be slight delays in the numbering and counting operations in the Kurdistan Region, particularly in Erbil, due to technical issues related to the late arrival of equipment.”<sup>547</sup> Only a small portion of the overall Iraqi government budget for conducting the census has been allocated to the IKR, which State assessed may affect data collection capabilities.<sup>548</sup>

State said that Iraq’s Statistics and Geographic Information Systems authority announced in April that it had signed contracts with companies from the United States, Finland, Canada, and China to implement the census. Each will be responsible for different parts of the census process.<sup>549</sup>

### After Delays, Elections in IKR Set for October

On October 20, voters in the IKR went to the polls for the first time in 6 years to elect a new Parliament as the region faces political, economic, and geopolitical challenges.<sup>550</sup> Iraq’s Independent High Electoral Commission (IHEC) will plan and conduct the elections, which will include early voting for security forces beginning on October 18.<sup>551</sup> Eligible voters from outside the IKR will be able to vote for the first time, according to a media report; voting centers will be located in Baghdad, Ninewa, Kirkuk, Diyala, Anbar, and Wasit provinces in addition to voting centers in each IKR province.<sup>552</sup>

State reported that IHEC met a key preparatory milestone when it assigned ballot lottery numbers to political parties on August 10.<sup>553</sup> The election campaign season will be limited to September 25 through October 15, according to local media reports.<sup>554</sup>

After voting has concluded, IHEC will conduct the mandatory tally of electronic ballot counting and manual counting before announcing the election results. Appeals will be heard first by the Electoral Judicial Panel, a panel of three judges from Iraq’s judiciary.<sup>555</sup>

State reported that the UN Assistance Mission for Iraq continued to provide electoral technical advisory support, while IHEC requested international monitoring of the polling process. The U.S. Mission in Iraq said it may provide volunteers to observe the democratic process with volunteers from other diplomatic missions in the IKR.<sup>556</sup>

According to local media reports, IHEC announced that it has approved 136 candidate lists comprising 1,191 candidates, including 823 men and 368 women, with 38 candidates representing minority communities. IHEC urged all parties to conduct their campaigns peacefully and in accordance with the electoral regulations and code of conduct.<sup>557</sup>

### After 8 Months, Kirkuk Forms a Government

According to media reports, the Kirkuk Provincial Council in Baghdad’s International Zone formed a government on August 10, ending an 8-month stalemate. State reported only 9 of the council’s 16 members attended the session, which did not include anyone from the KDP, the Iraqi Turkmen Front, or the Arab Alliance. The Provincial Council elected Sunni

**On October 20, voters in the IKR went to the polls for the first time in 6 years to elect a new Parliament as the region faces political, economic, and geopolitical challenges.**





A UN staff member teaches a remedial class at a protection center in Hasansham U3 IDP camp, Hamdaniya, Ninewa, supported by BHA. (USAID photo)

Mohammed Ibrahim al-Hadfidh (Taqadum) as chairman and Iraqi Kurd Rebwar Taha Mustafa (PUK) as governor.<sup>558</sup>

State highlighted media reports that the Iraqi Turkmen Front and the Arab Alliance denounced the council session as “illegal and void” and announced their intention to pursue legal action. The parties cited procedural irregularities, such as the failure to formally notify the session’s presiding officer, the lack of adequate notice to provincial council members, holding the session outside the province in the absence of an emergency, and a failure to engage in required consultations with relevant stakeholders.<sup>559</sup>

Referencing media reports, State said that the KDP also rejected the government formation process as “fraught with legal and procedural problems,” claiming that the results did not reflect the true will of Kirkuk’s residents. On August 20, the Iraqi Federal Supreme Court ruled against two petitions that sought to suspend the council’s formation, including the election of the chairman and the governor. The Court advised the Iraqi president to delay recognizing the newly elected governor until the appeal against the session was resolved.<sup>560</sup>

## Proposed Changes to Iraqi Law Would Permit Marriage of Minors

According to USAID, the Iraqi government has faced public outcry over a proposed amendment to its Personal Status Law.<sup>561</sup> Originally established in 1959, this law regulates marriages, divorces, custody of children, and inheritances.<sup>562</sup> Critics argue that these amendments would harm women and children by potentially legalizing out-of-court child marriages and undermining state authority.<sup>563</sup> Member of Parliament Raed al-Maliki, who proposed the amendments, denies that they would permit the marriage of minors.<sup>564</sup>

Public opposition is organized through groups advocating for the protection of the existing law.<sup>565</sup> Some parliamentarians have expressed their disagreement with the proposed amendments, claiming that they were pushed through an illegal session due to a lack of quorum.<sup>566</sup> State continued to monitor the debate on the proposed changes. USAID reported that its implementing partners were monitoring the situation of the amendment to the law.<sup>567</sup>

## SYRIA

### The DAANES Prepares for Municipal Elections Amid U.S. and International Concerns

The Democratic Autonomous Administration of North and East Syria (DAANES) announced on September 5 that it had authorized the electoral commissions in northeastern Syria to begin preparing for municipal elections without specifying a date for the elections, according to a news media outlet.<sup>568</sup>

The DAANES initially scheduled the elections to be held on June 11 but postponed them until August and then postponed them again without setting an official date.<sup>569</sup> The DAANES claimed that the decision to postpone came in response to the demands of political parties and alliances that demanded the postponement because of the lack of international elections monitoring.<sup>570</sup>

According to a news source, the United States, Russia, France, Germany, and the United Kingdom called on the DAANES not to hold elections.<sup>571</sup> Turkish Defense Minister Yasar Guler stated, according to a news report, that the Syrian Democratic Forces' (SDF) plans to organize local elections in northeastern Syria pose a threat to Turkish national security.<sup>572</sup>

The United States assessed that the necessary conditions for convening free, fair, transparent, and inclusive elections in Syria, including in the North and East, have not been met and, therefore, does not support the recent announcement by the DAANES calling on the High Elections Committee to begin preparations for municipal elections, according to State.<sup>573</sup> The United States has consistently stated that any elections that occur in Syria should be free, fair, transparent, and inclusive, in line with UNSCR 2254.<sup>574</sup>

### Syrian Democratic Council Boycotts Syrian Government Parliamentary Elections

According to media reports, the Syrian Democratic Council (SDC), which is the political leadership of the DAANES and the SDF, boycotted Syria's parliamentary elections held on July 15.<sup>575</sup> The SDC called on the Syrian people to refrain from participating in the parliamentary elections.<sup>576</sup>

Media reported that President Bashar al-Assad's Ba'ath Party won all 185 seats it vied for in the 250-seat Parliament.<sup>577</sup> The elections, which were reportedly riddled with fraud and violations, were held in districts across Syria under regime control and excluded areas in the northwest and northeast.<sup>578</sup> The voting was repeated in several districts, including Aleppo, Latakia, Hama, and Daraa, after election officials said there were irregularities, including voters casting ballots twice.<sup>579</sup> According to State, such actions further contributed to distrust in the electoral process. In As-Suwayda—where protests have taken place for the past year—Syrians demonstrated against the elections they deemed illegitimate with some evacuating electoral centers and burning ballot boxes. Regime forces fired on protesters, killing one.<sup>580</sup> The SDC operates in northeastern Syria outside the control of the government.<sup>581</sup>

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**In August, Czechia was planning a fact-finding mission to Syria aimed at establishing safe zones in coordination with the Syrian regime.**

The SDF stated that the Syrian crisis can only be resolved, and the aspirations of the Syrian people realized, through a political solution aligned with UNSCR 2254.<sup>582</sup> The SDC emphasized the importance of the intra-Syrian dialogue as a crucial foundation for achieving a sustainable political resolution that guarantees the interests of all Syrians.<sup>583</sup>

The SDC urged the international community to pressure all parties to engage in a political process to arrive at a solution that will allow for the release of detainees, ensure the safe return of refugees, end repression against civilians, provide a free environment for political activity and media coverage, and end the occupation of Syrian territory.<sup>584</sup> The SDC was prepared to join initiatives that focused on a political transition to a democratic inclusive governance system in Syria.<sup>585</sup>

### **Seven European Countries Continue Appeal for Reassessment of Situation in Syria to Allow Safe Zones**

In June, seven European countries—Austria, Czechia, Cyprus, Greece, Italy, Malta, and Poland—appealed to the UN Security Council for a reassessment of the situation in Syria and for allowing the voluntary return of refugees.<sup>586</sup> In August, Czechia was planning a fact-finding mission to Syria aimed at establishing safe zones in coordination with the Syrian regime.<sup>587</sup>

The UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) said that it did not encourage voluntary return to Syria on a large scale because of lack of security and poor economic conditions, according to a media report quoting a UNHCR official.<sup>588</sup> According to surveys conducted in countries hosting Syrians, UNHCR said most refugees faced security challenges, legal concerns, and lack of job opportunities.<sup>589</sup>

State reported that some European countries are exploring the establishment of geographic safe zones in Syria where refugees can return.<sup>590</sup> State said that it understands pressures associated with migration issues are high across Europe and the eastern Mediterranean and welcomes opportunities to discuss approaches to address countries' legitimate concerns while upholding international human rights obligations.<sup>591</sup>

The United States strongly opposes involuntary returns of Syrian refugees to Syria based on a determination that only isolated parts of Syria may be safe for those who have left the country.<sup>592</sup> The United States fully agrees with the UN that refugee returns to Syria will only be appropriate if they are voluntary, safe, informed, and dignified.<sup>593</sup> In line with UNHCR and the Office of the UN Special Envoy for Syria, the U.S. position remains that Syria is not safe for such returns, and that there are no “safe zones” that are categorically safe for involuntary refugee returns.<sup>594</sup> The United States remains committed to respecting the principle of non-refoulement (not returning individuals to countries where they may face persecution or torture) and urges all countries to similarly respect the principle.<sup>595</sup>

## Drug Production and Distribution Remain a Concern

According to media reports, Iran's Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) established a drug production factory in Dayr az Zawr in July.<sup>596</sup> State reported that Iranian and Iran-aligned forces, including the IRGC and Hezbollah, threaten regional stability and the security of U.S. allies and partners.<sup>597</sup> These forces play a particularly destabilizing role in Syria, threatening prospects for a peaceful resolution to the Syrian conflict, State said.<sup>598</sup>

According to diplomatic reporting, the United States worked closely with Jordan, Lebanon, and other partners to help address the security and health challenges posed by production and distribution of captagon.<sup>599</sup> The United States reminded partners in the region that normalization with the Syrian regime has not ended or decreased captagon production.<sup>600</sup>

## ECONOMIC GROWTH

Through diplomacy and stabilization programs, State and USAID seek to help Iraq expand its inclusive private sector growth, create opportunities for U.S. investment through comprehensive economic reform, implement anti-corruption measures, and diversify Iraq's economy.<sup>601</sup> In Syria, the U.S. Government promotes economic stabilization programs to counter recruitment into ISIS and al-Qaeda and humanitarian assistance to reduce human suffering. (See pages 88-93.)

## IRAQ

### Iraq's GDP Improves as Government Deficits Increase

The International Monetary Fund (IMF) reported that Iraq's annual growth stood at 1.4 percent through April 2024, an improvement over the 2.2 percent GDP decline in 2023. The IMF is forecasting 5.3 percent GDP growth for 2025, with non-oil GDP growth projected at a lower 3.3 percent. Inflation stood at 4 percent in April 2024 and is projected to remain at that level through 2025.<sup>602</sup>

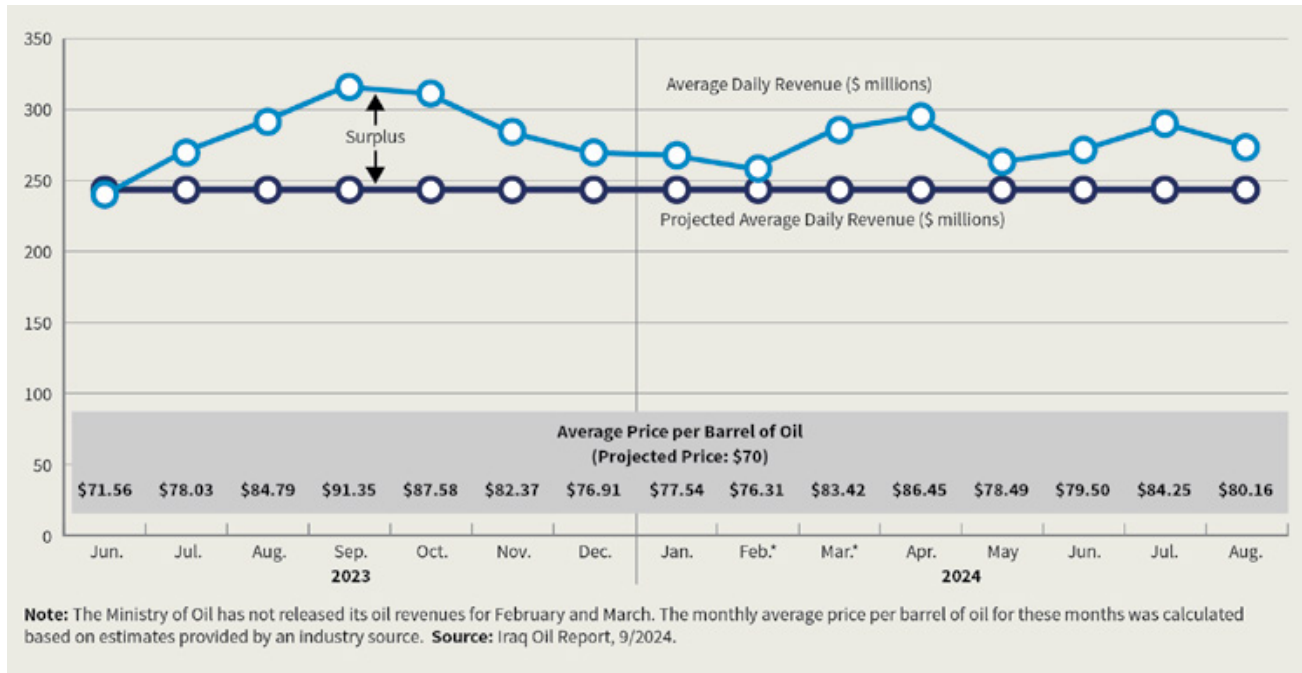
Increased government spending, primarily on public sector wages, will produce larger fiscal deficits in 2024. An Iraqi government funding shortfall in August prompted the suspension of capital spending in the near-term, according to State. This funding shortfall has forced the Iraqi government to confront its options on how to raise capital. It could convert its substantial foreign reserves; however, that drawdown would be at the expense of long-term capital investment.<sup>603</sup>

State assessed that the current sharp increase in public sector wages addressed immediate unemployment concerns at the expense of longer-term capital investment. This action runs contrary to Prime Minister al-Sudani's core economic philosophy of shrinking the government's role in the economy to permit private sector expansion that can be the engine of future employment opportunities.<sup>604</sup>

State reported that the expansion of the public sector wage bill may act as a drag on structural banking sector reform because it will divert resources needed to fund longer-term reform efforts instead of addressing the immediate demand to fund public sector employee salaries.<sup>605</sup>

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Figure 5.

**Iraq's Actual vs. Projected Daily Oil Revenue, in \$ Millions, June 2023–August 2024**

The Iraqi government's focus on addressing near-term employment challenges through patronage spending provides nothing substantial to boost international trade opportunities, according to State. Instead, the reduction in capital spending has reduced, at least in the near-term, opportunities for government contracting opportunities.<sup>606</sup>

### Iraq Exceeds OPEC+ Oil Production Quotas

Iraq acknowledged in mid-July that it had exceeded its OPEC+ quota by 184,000 barrels per day (bpd) in June, according to media reports, and pledged to compensate for its excess output by cutting production.<sup>607</sup> Iraq again exceeded the OPEC+ production quota in July.<sup>608</sup> Since January 2024, Iraq's OPEC+ quota has been 4 million bpd; Iraq exceeded the monthly quota by about 200,000 bpd until July, when it exceeded the quota by 324,000 bpd.<sup>609</sup>

In response to Iraq's overproduction, OPEC+ established a plan under which Iraq's production would be reduced each month from August 2024 through September 2025, as compensation for its overproduction from January through July 2024. Under the plan, OPEC reduced Iraq's production quota by 90,000 bpd in August and 95,000 bpd in September.<sup>610</sup> Based on news and analyst reports, production fell modestly in August from the July spike after Iraq canceled 3 million barrels of crude oil exports to help comply with the OPEC+ reduction plan. The drop in August production resulted in a decrease in revenues for the month when compared to revenues from the July production spike. (See Figure 5.) Industry analysts predicted further production cuts in September, which may result in further revenue reductions; however, production data was not available when this report was released.<sup>611</sup>

## Demand for Electricity Hits All-Time High over the Summer

State reported that the Iraqi government invested in upgrading its electricity grid during the quarter. It also has new electricity interconnections online from Türkiye and Jordan, and another interconnection from Kuwait is on schedule to be completed by June 2025. State said that Iraq is working on a pilot project to install upgraded electricity meters to help curb demand, which was at an all-time high over the summer.

In the IKR, State reported that the Kurdistan Regional Government’s (KRG’s) poor fiscal situation makes it unable to improve electricity generation for households and businesses. The KRG is “barely keeping the lights on” and has accrued significant debts to independent power producers and the company extracting gas from the Khor Mor gas field, State said.<sup>612</sup>

## Türkiye and Iraq Address Water Shortages

On July 1, the Iraq-Türkiye joint committee on water met to discuss challenges related to water distribution between the two countries. State reported that the two countries signed key water-related agreements and protocols with a focus on modernization; technical issues related to the fair and sustainable distribution of water; environmental impacts; and measures to alleviate Iraq’s water shortages.

According to State, the Turkish delegation expressed Türkiye’s commitment to supporting Iraq in its efforts to achieve water security, stressing the importance of regional cooperation in facing common environmental and water challenges. The parties agreed to hold periodic meetings to follow up on implementation of the memorandums of understanding that Iraq and Türkiye signed in April and on the recommendations and decisions that resulted from the meeting.<sup>613</sup>

## Iraq Adopts Strategy to Protect the Environment and Address Climate Change

On September 18, Iraq launched the National Strategy for the Protection and Improvement of the Environment, chaired by Iraq’s Minister of Environment Nizar Mohammed Saeed, who recognized USAID and the UN Development Program (UNDP) for their support in preparing the national strategy. U.S. Ambassador to Iraq Alina L. Romanowski said the U.S. “partnered with UNDP and worked together with the Iraqi government to improve environment protection.”<sup>614</sup>

For decades, Iraq’s natural environment, once known for fertile Mesopotamian plains and vast marshes, has faced water shortages, desertification, and severe pollution. According to media reports, the National Strategy for the Protection and Improvement of the Environment aims to reverse environmental damage caused by mismanagement, environmental neglect, and decades of war. The reports say that estimated land affected by desertification exceeds 27,000 square kilometers (about the size of Massachusetts), while upriver dam construction in Türkiye and Iran and water resource mismanagement in Iraq have had a dramatic impact, reducing the size of Iraq’s historic marshlands by nearly 90 percent.<sup>615</sup>

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## USAID Supports Activities to Address Climate Change in Iraq

To address the challenge of water scarcity in Iraq, USAID reported that its programming in Iraq aims to improve access to clean water, improve water management, and build climate resilience for vulnerable Iraqis.<sup>616</sup> On July 25, USAID Iraq and the World Food Programme (WFP) signed a memorandum of understanding and convened the Iraqi government's ministers of water resources, environment, and agriculture, along with provincial-level agricultural leaders from Kurdish-, Sunni-, and Shia-majority communities to launch a new 3-year, \$15 million activity under this program.<sup>617</sup> The purpose of the program is to support Iraq to strengthen climate preparedness and risk reduction, adopt modern agricultural practices, and preserve the livelihoods of vulnerable groups, including women and youth in rural areas.<sup>618</sup>

In addition, USAID Iraq funded the UN Children's Agency (UNICEF) to implement an activity focused on inclusive access to sustainable water and sanitation services in Iraq; the launch of this activity is planned for October 2.<sup>619</sup> To support these efforts, USAID obligated \$10 million.<sup>620</sup> USAID also obligated \$10.825 million for the Climate Adaption for Food Security and Stability activity implemented by the WFP.<sup>621</sup>

## STABILIZATION AND HUMANITARIAN ASSISTANCE

### IRAQ

USAID BHA funded four active awards during the quarter.<sup>622</sup> State PRM provided humanitarian assistance through a range of NGO and international organization partners.<sup>623</sup> (See pages 94-95.)

### Access Restrictions Continue to Limit USAID Monitoring and Evaluation

USAID reported no changes in its ability to monitor and evaluate programs during the quarter.<sup>624</sup> During the quarter, staff from USAID and State visited the IKR to evaluate U.S.-funded activities in IDP camps. The team met with beneficiaries, camp management authorities, and staff from U.S. implementing partners, including UN and NGO partners.<sup>625</sup> These in-person meetings enabled more in-depth discussions on award progress and contextual information sharing.<sup>626</sup>

Table 7.

#### U.S. Government Humanitarian Funding for the Iraq Response in FY 2024

<b>USAID BHA</b>	\$3,569,780
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>\$3,569,780</b>

Source: USAID, "Iraq-Complex Emergency Fact Sheet #2," 6/3/2024.

For areas where USAID staff cannot travel due to security restrictions, USAID relies on third-party monitors for monitoring and oversight of its Iraq programs.<sup>627</sup> During the quarter, USAID used findings from its third-party monitors to address program deficiencies and implement corrective actions.<sup>628</sup> For example, the monitors confirmed that NGO partners had proper referral pathways for children needing specialized protective services in parenting classes and child-friendly spaces.<sup>629</sup> In response to issues

A medical doctor consults with a female patient at a UN pharmacy in Hasansham U2 Camp, Hamdaniya, Ninewa, supported through BHA. (USAID photo)



with beneficiary verification identified by the monitor, partners adopted digital systems and adjusted signature practices.<sup>630</sup> Additionally, after a monitor identified that a complaint and feedback mechanism lacked a female operator and was inaccessible during certain hours, the implementing partner hired a female operator to ensure complaints could be submitted more effectively.<sup>631</sup>

At times, however, stringent checkpoint measures in some parts of Iraq, such as al-Qaim and Rutba in western Anbar province, limited USAID's ability to monitor its programming.<sup>632</sup> USAID reported that its third-party monitoring mechanism conducted 195 monitoring site visits to eight stabilization implementing partner activities during the quarter.<sup>633</sup>

USAID's third-party monitoring mechanism did not monitor activities implemented under seven awards (2 economic growth; 3 democracy, human rights, and governance; and 2 additional stabilization awards) during the quarter.<sup>634</sup> For one of these economic growth awards, USAID plans to use its third party monitoring mechanism to conduct site visits on small and medium enterprises that benefit from commercial loans that its CATALYZE program supports once those loans are disbursed.<sup>635</sup> CATALYZE is a USAID access to finance program that collaborates with local financial institutions to facilitate small- and medium-sized enterprise lending, to increase access to financing and foster improved employment opportunities for youth.<sup>636</sup> In June, USAID announced that the National Bank of Iraq partnered with USAID to provide \$1.65 million in financing to small- and medium-sized enterprises in Iraq. USAID expects that CATALYZE will mobilize \$9 million in provide sector capitol for a minimum of 366 Iraqi small and medium enterprises by 2025.<sup>637</sup> USAID also reported that it is conducting future planning to conduct third-party monitoring of its other recently started economic growth award.<sup>638</sup> Two awards related to democracy, human rights, and governance had recently entered their implementation phase and a third award was recently awarded; third-party monitoring visits for these activities is planned to begin in the first quarter of FY 2025.<sup>639</sup> Two stabilization activities were also not monitored during the quarter with one in the sustainability and strategic planning phase and the other in the planning phase.<sup>640</sup>



During the quarter, BHA funded 45 active awards worth more than \$842 million.

## SYRIA

Northeastern Syria continued to face many challenges during the quarter, including high commodity price fluctuations, continued devaluation of the Syrian pound, and reduced agriculture yields as the result of drought conditions.<sup>641</sup>

State stabilization programs worked in areas not under the control of the Syrian government to support local governance entities, civil society, and Syrian communities. Areas of support included education, community security, independent media, civil society, reintegration, reconciliation, removal of explosive remnants of war, restoration of essential services, and a political resolution to the Syrian conflict in line with UNSCR 2254.<sup>642</sup>

In July, State met with Syrian civil society leaders to learn about their efforts to address challenges facing Syrians and affirmed U.S. support for civil society organizations and their critical work to represent their communities and build a better future for all Syrians.<sup>643</sup> State frequently meets Syrian civil society leaders to discuss issues of shared concern.<sup>644</sup> The United States recognizes the importance of civil society participating in the work of the UN Global Counter-Terrorism Coordination Compact, a framework that guides member states in their implementation of the United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy.<sup>645</sup>

During the quarter, BHA funded 45 active awards worth more than \$842 million.<sup>646</sup>

## USAID Implementers Adjust to Conflict Environment

The ongoing clashes in northeastern Syria have severely impeded civilians’ access to essential services and humanitarian aid, according to OCHA.<sup>647</sup> Although conflict dynamics have decreased since late 2023 and early 2024, major infrastructure remains damaged, affecting fuel production and prices.<sup>648</sup>

Humanitarian partners have generally managed challenges associated with the conflict environment, USAID reported.<sup>649</sup> However, implementer staff continued to experience threats, harassment, and theft during the quarter.<sup>650</sup> In one case, USAID BHA implementer staff were threatened, and one individual was assaulted, during distribution of water tanks.<sup>651</sup> Partner staff evacuated the area, resulting in the theft of 10 water tanks.<sup>652</sup> In another incident, implementer staff conducting a population verification exercise were threatened

Table 8.

### U.S. Government Humanitarian Funding for the Syria Regional Crisis Response in FY 2024

<b>USAID BHA</b>	\$276,547,474
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>\$276,547,474</b>

**Note:** Funds committed or obligated in FY 2024. These figures reflect publicly announced funding as of May 27, 2024.

**Source:** USAID, “Syria Complex Emergency,” 8/2/2024.

Table 9.

### U.S. Government Humanitarian Funding for the Syria Response in FYs 2012–2024

<b>USAID BHA</b>	\$9,020,525,222
<b>STATE PRM</b>	\$8,802,553,455
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>\$17,823,078,677</b>

**Note:** The total U.S. Government funding for the Syria regional crisis response does not include \$251,475,623 in FY 2023 funding for the 2023 earthquake response.

**Source:** USAID, “Syria Complex Emergency,” 8/2/2024.

# SYRIA: U.S. ASSISTANCE SNAPSHOT

July 1, 2024–September 30, 2024

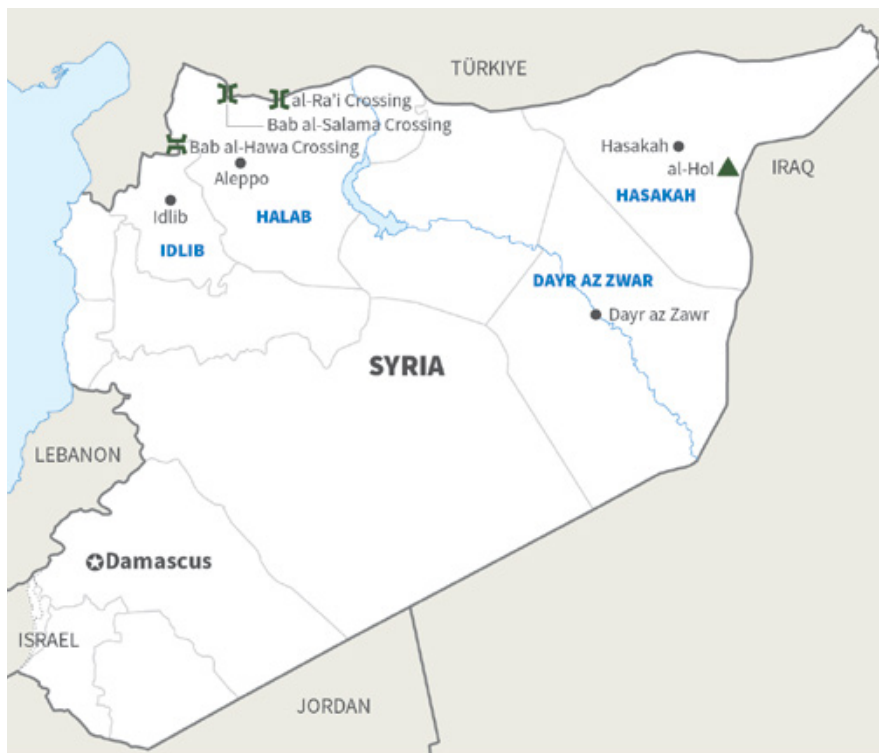
During the quarter, the economic situation in Syria was at its worst: high levels of humanitarian need caused by years of conflict have been compounded by the COVID-19 pandemic, devastating earthquakes, historic levels of drought that decimated food crops, and the collapse of the Lebanese financial sector.

**BORDER CROSSINGS** The Syrian regime extended authorization for the Bab al-Salama and al-Ra'i border crossings into northwestern Syria until November 13, 2024, under the “consent model” rather than UN Security Council Resolutions. Consent for the Bab al-Hawa crossing, extended on July 10, 2024, is valid for 6 months and will need renewal by January 13, 2025.

**NORTHWESTERN SYRIA** Residents from camps for displaced persons experienced a spike in temperatures, water cuts, and the spread of garbage because of suspended water and sanitation projects in those camps. As a result of the high temperatures and water scarcity, there was a higher prevalence of disease, placing the elderly and children at particular risk. A USAID partner provided approximately 9 gallons of safe drinking water per person per day and garbage collection services for approximately 34,000 IDPs in Aleppo and Idlib.

**FOOD SECURITY** USAID BHA continued to monitor potential impacts on food security due to decreased donor funding in Syria. USAID BHA supports the UN World Food Programme (WFP), the UN World Health Organization (WHO), and 15 NGOs providing emergency food and nutrition assistance within Syria and to Syrian refugees in neighboring countries.

**HASAKAH** Aid workers faced movement restrictions, which impeded the timely delivery of humanitarian assistance. Drivers went on strike after the DAANES reduced diesel allocations for internal transport vehicles and taxi drivers. Hostilities also resulted in power cuts that affected hospitals and water stations, compounding an ongoing water crisis. Residents' access to water has been limited because of decreased rainfall, hostilities, and the effects of the economic crisis on the water and electricity infrastructure.



**DAYR AZ ZWAR** Tensions between the SDF and tribal forces have restricted the movement of civilians, aid workers, water, and food, including through the closure of Euphrates River crossings. The fighting factions targeted or used critical public infrastructure for military purposes, resulting in heightened risks for civilian access to services on both banks of the river and the closure of the river crossing. The clashes resulted in several displacements and an urgent need for shelter, food, water, health, and protection services.

**16.7 million**

Estimated Population In Need of Humanitarian Assistance

**12.9 million**

Estimated Number of Food Insecure People

**7.2 million**

Estimated Number of IDPs

**90 percent**

Percentage of Syrians Who Live in Extreme Poverty on Less Than \$1.90 a Day

## U.S. ASSISTANCE IN 2024

**\$4.1 billion**

Needed to Meet Humanitarian Needs in 2024, the Highest Funding Request for a Single Country

**\$938 million**

U.S. Funding for Humanitarian Assistance

**\$5 million**

U.S. Funding to the Syria Recovery Trust Fund

**\$93 million**

U.S. Funding for Stabilization Activities

**Sources:** USAID BHA, response to USAID OIG request for information, 9/13/2024; USAID, “Syria Complex Emergency,” 5/27/2024; USAID, “Syria Complex Emergency,” 8/2/2024; OCHA, “Joint Statement by UN Resident Coordinator and Humanitarian Coordinator for Syria, Adam Abdelmoula, and Regional Humanitarian Coordinator for the Syria Crisis, Ramanathan Balakrishnan on the Recent Violence and its Impact on the Humanitarian Situation in North-East Syria,” 8/14/2024; OCHA, “Highlights of The Noon Briefing by Farhan Haq, Deputy Spokesman for Secretary-General António Guterres,” 8/8/2024; UN, press release, “Tensions in Syria, Region ‘Have Reached Dangerous New Levels,’ Special Envoy Warns Security Council, Calling for Inclusive Political Process,” 8/28/2024.

**As of September 6, authorities had reported 36 confirmed or suspected cases of cholera in northeastern Syria.**

by a crowd which attacked their office.<sup>653</sup> Implementer staff evacuated without injuries and activities in the area were temporarily suspended.<sup>654</sup> In addition, tribal clashes temporarily suspended activities for 1 to 2 days.<sup>655</sup> However, these incidents did not result in any programmatic impact.<sup>656</sup>

To mitigate recurring access constraints in northwestern and northeastern Syria, USAID has adapted by working from alternate locations. For example, USAID BHA supports Public International Organizations and NGOs operating out of Gaziantep, Türkiye, to serve northwestern Syria.<sup>657</sup> Cross-border NGOs entering via Iraq and public international organizations operating from Damascus support northeastern Syria.<sup>658</sup>

USAID BHA reported that two third-party monitoring efforts in Syria: a direct contract to monitor partner activities, and a requirement for NGO partners to have their own third-party monitoring mechanisms.<sup>659</sup> Monitoring methods include site visits, virtual visits, interviews, surveys, and desk reviews.<sup>660</sup> All partners must fully cooperate with USAID BHA's contracted third-party monitor to ensure program implementation and report any aid interference.<sup>661</sup>

In conflict-affected areas, third-party monitoring contractors work closely with implementers to ensure the safety of local staff by taking extra precautions at select sites.<sup>662</sup> However, access constraints and insecurity may sometimes limit contractors' ability to reach certain parts of Syria.<sup>663</sup>

### **Cholera, Health Care Access Remain Primary Concerns**

USAID BHA supports the International Organization for Migration (IOM) and several NGOs to provide water, sanitation, and hygiene services and other multi-sector assistance in IDP sites and host communities in northwestern Syria.<sup>664</sup>

As of September 6, authorities had reported 36 confirmed or suspected cases of cholera in northeastern Syria.<sup>665</sup> USAID implementers provided essential health and water, sanitation, and hygiene assistance in response.<sup>666</sup>

Syrians face limited access to health care staff and facilities. The percentage of functioning primary health care facilities decreased by nearly 9 percent from 2023 to 2024.<sup>667</sup> In response to elevated needs, Health Cluster partners, including USAID BHA implementers, provided more than 456,600 courses of treatment, supported nearly 495,700 medical procedures, and trained 70 staff on various health topics from January to May.<sup>668</sup> They focused on districts and populations with the most severe service gaps.<sup>669</sup>

### **Water Crisis Leads to Income Losses, Health Concerns**

Insufficient and poorly distributed rainfall, severe drought conditions, low water levels in the Euphrates River, and damaged water infrastructure have resulted in a water crisis in Syria.<sup>670</sup> Additionally, reduced electricity from the destruction of key infrastructure in late 2023 and early 2024 has hindered water pumping and supply in northern Hasakah province.<sup>671</sup>

As a result, millions of Syrians experience reduced access to drinking and domestic water, leading to significant harvest and income losses.<sup>672</sup> They also experience increased water-borne diseases, malnutrition rates, and protection risks, particularly among women and girls.<sup>673</sup> Water shortages have forced households to alter hygiene practices and increase household debt to afford high water costs.<sup>674</sup>

USAID BHA reported that its approach to the water crisis remained consistent with the previous quarter.<sup>675</sup> USAID BHA supported several NGO partners and public international organizations to provide water, sanitation, and hygiene assistance in Syria.<sup>676</sup> This includes distributing essential hygiene items and rehabilitating small-scale sanitation and water systems, such as handwashing stations and latrines in displacement camps and informal settlements.<sup>677</sup> In northeastern Syria, USAID BHA provided support through emergency water trucks and distributed water storage tanks and treatment devices.<sup>678</sup>

## PROSECUTIONS AND SANCTIONS ON ISIS

Several U.S. Government agencies conduct activities to degrade ISIS capabilities in Iraq and Syria as part of a whole-of-government effort to reduce ISIS manpower and disrupt its financing. Efforts include prosecutions of foreign terrorist fighters and homegrown violent extremists linked to ISIS; disrupting ISIS financing; designation of ISIS-linked individuals and organizations as terrorists; support for efforts to repatriate ISIS-affiliated detainees and associated family members and displaced persons in northeastern Syria; strengthening the ISF's ability to gather evidence in support of warrants and prosecutions; and mitigating threats to the homeland posed by ISIS-linked individuals attempting to enter the United States to conduct attacks.<sup>679</sup>

Table 10.

### Department of Justice Prosecutions and Activities Against Terrorism, July–September 2024

Date and Jurisdiction	Description
<b>Eastern District of Tennessee</b> <b>July 17</b>	<b>Benjamin Alan Carpenter</b> was sentenced to 240 months in prison and 20 years of supervised release for attempting to provide material support to ISIS. Carpenter served as the leader of Ahlut-Tawhid Publications, an international organization of pro-ISIS supporters dedicated to translating, producing, and distributing ISIS propaganda throughout the world. In 2020 and 2021, Carpenter contacted an individual he believed to be affiliated with ISIS' central media bureau and provided translation services for a project intended to relaunch Al-Hayat Media Center, ISIS' official foreign-language media arm. Unknown to him, that individual was an FBI undercover employee who had infiltrated Carpenter's group.
<b>District of Arizona</b> <b>August 1</b>	<b>Ahmed Mahad Mohamed</b> and <b>Abdi Yemani Hussein</b> pled guilty to a charge of conspiring to provide material support and resources to ISIS. Mohamed and Hussein met in person in 2019 to discuss their plans. The defendants began making travel arrangements to join ISIS and purchased plane tickets from Tucson, Arizona, to Cairo, Egypt, where they planned to continue to the Sinai Peninsula and join ISIS. The FBI arrested them before they boarded their flight.

Source: DoJ OIG, response to DoD OIG request for information, 24.4 WOG DOJ 01C, 10/3/2024.

Since 2014, the Department of Justice has charged more than 245 individuals with international terrorism-related conduct relating to ISIS and obtained more than 208 convictions.

## DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE

Since 2014, the Department of Justice (DoJ) has charged more than 245 individuals with international terrorism-related conduct relating to ISIS and obtained more than 208 convictions. The DoJ reported that the remaining cases are in various stages of litigation.<sup>680</sup>

The DoJ reported that no one was transferred to the United States from Iraq or Syria to face Federal criminal charges related to terrorism during the quarter. Since 2014, 3 individuals from Iraq and 12 individuals from Syria have been transferred to the United States to stand trial on Federal criminal charges related to terrorism.<sup>681</sup>

## DEPARTMENT OF THE TREASURY

Treasury has designated 183 ISIS-associated individuals and entities since 2014.<sup>682</sup> On July 23, 2024, Treasury sanctioned three ISIS facilitators operating in Africa for having materially assisted, sponsored, or provided financial, material, or technological support for, or goods or services to or in support of, ISIS, pursuant to Executive Order 13224.<sup>683</sup>

- **Abubakar Swalleh.** Swalleh is a South Africa- and Zambia-based ISIS operative involved in the physical transfer of funds from South Africa to the Democratic Republic of the Congo. Swalleh also facilitates the movement of ISIS-affiliated individuals from Uganda to South Africa and vice-versa.<sup>684</sup>
- **Zayd Gangat.** Gangat is an ISIS facilitator and trainer based in South Africa, where ISIS leaders have historically used robbery, extortion, and kidnap-for-ransom operations to generate funds for the group.<sup>685</sup>
- **Hamidah Nabagala.** Nabagala is based in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and serves as an intermediary for ISIS financial flows in central Africa. Nabagala was accused of funding the October 2021 Kampala bombing, which killed one person and injured at least three others.<sup>686</sup>

## DEPARTMENT OF STATE

### State Took Steps to Impose Visa Restrictions on 14 Syrian Regime Officials

On August 30, State took steps to impose visa restrictions on 14 Syrian regime officials for their involvement in repressing rights in Syria, including involvement in or association with enforced disappearances.<sup>687</sup> State noted that the actions of these individuals are part of a broader systemic pattern of abuses committed in Syria.<sup>688</sup> The United States called on the Assad regime and other actors in Syria to cease the reprehensible practice of disappearance and abduction, clarify the fate of those missing, humanely release all those still alive, return the remains of those who have perished in custody, and engage in good faith with the newly-established Independent Institution on Missing Persons in Syria. Furthermore, the United States expressed its solidarity with all U.S. citizens who are missing or unjustly detained in Syria and called on the Assad regime to account for its actions.<sup>689</sup>

## DEPARTMENT OF HOMELAND SECURITY


In collaboration with other Federal agencies, the U.S. Central Command (USCENTCOM), Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) Homeland Security Investigation (HSI) office continues to monitor and mitigate threats that ISIS in Iraq and Syria poses to the United States. Specifically, the HSI office in Amman provides oversight of HSI operational and investigative activity in Jordan, Syria, Iraq, and Lebanon, which is synchronized with USCENTCOM's OIR mission to ensure ISIS does not launch attacks against the United States.<sup>690</sup>

HSI, as part of its collaboration with the FBI's Joint Terrorism Task Force, serves as the largest Federal investigative member of the task force to utilize its unique customs and immigration authorities in furtherance of the counterterrorism mission. HSI contributes to interagency partners daily, as part of the task force model, by providing subject matter expertise and operational support as outlined by HSI's unique administrative and criminal authorities to disrupt any threats to the U.S. homeland.<sup>691</sup>









Army Prepositioned Stock-5 M1224 MaxxPro mine-resistant ambush protected wheeled vehicles are prepared to be issued to Camp Arifjan, Kuwait. (U.S. Army photo)

## OVERSIGHT ACTIVITIES

78 Strategic Planning

78 Audits, Inspections, and Evaluations

82 Investigations

83 Hotline Activity

# OVERSIGHT ACTIVITIES

Under the Lead IG framework, the DoD OIG, State OIG, USAID OIG, and partner agencies conduct audits, inspections, evaluations, and investigations related to Operation Inherent Resolve.

## STRATEGIC PLANNING

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 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, the Treasury, Energy, and Homeland Security, and of the Intelligence Community.

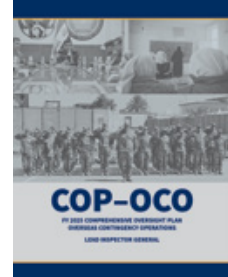
Pursuant to the Inspector General Act of 1978, as amended, the Lead IG develops and implements a joint strategic plan to guide comprehensive oversight of programs and operations for each overseas contingency operation. The Lead IG agencies update the oversight plan annually.

The *FY 2025 Joint Strategic Oversight Plan for OIR*, published on October 1, 2024, as part of the *FY 2025 Comprehensive Oversight Plan for Overseas Contingency Operations*, is organized into three strategic oversight areas: Military Operations and Security Cooperation; Diplomacy, Governance, Stabilization, and Humanitarian Assistance; and Support to Mission.

## AUDITS, INSPECTIONS, AND EVALUATIONS

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.

DoD OIG oversight and investigative staff maintained their presence in Kuwait, Qatar, and Bahrain during the quarter. State OIG staff assigned to Washington, D.C., and Frankfurt, Germany, conducted oversight work of the State activities in Iraq and Syria. USAID OIG staff provided oversight of USAID activities in Syria and Iraq from their regional office in Frankfurt supported by additional staff in Washington, D.C.



**FY 2025  
Comprehensive  
Oversight Plan  
for Overseas  
Contingency  
Operations.**

## COMPLETED PROJECTS

From July 1 to September 30, 2024, the Lead IG agencies issued four oversight reports related to OIR, as detailed in the following summaries. Completed reports by Lead IG agencies are available on their respective web pages.

### DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE OFFICE OF INSPECTOR GENERAL

#### *Audit of Munitions Storage in Bahrain*

DODIG-2024-125; September 4, 2024

The DoD OIG conducted this audit to determine whether the DoD stored munitions at Naval Support Activity (NSA) Bahrain in accordance with applicable safety and security policies. This is the third in a series of four reports reviewing munitions within the U.S. Central Command area of responsibility.

At NSA Bahrain, individual units are responsible for their own munitions. Explosives safety officers are responsible for providing explosives safety for munitions storage, and Navy Security Forces officials are responsible for planning and coordinating installation security, including the security of munitions storage.

The DoD OIG found that Navy officials at NSA Bahrain stored munitions in accordance with applicable safety policies, including maintaining site planning documentation, storing munitions in accordance with approved net explosive weight limits, and protecting munitions storage structures with lightning protection systems. However, Navy officials could improve the accountability and security of stored munitions.

Specifically, Navy officials at NSA Bahrain did not always maintain accurate inventory records or post restricted area signs at munitions storage areas, which potentially reduced the ability of Navy officials to fully determine readiness for completing missions and potentially exposed unauthorized personnel to dangerous areas. Additionally, Navy officials did not always store munitions of the same lot number in adjacent stacks, which reduces the ability of Navy officials to locate munitions quickly in the event they are issued for use, require maintenance, or are deemed defective.

The DoD OIG made four recommendations to the Commander of Navy Munitions Command Atlantic, who agreed with the recommendations and described actions planned to address them. Therefore, the recommendations are resolved but will remain open until the DoD OIG verifies the completed agreed-upon actions.

The Commander of Navy Region Europe, Africa, and Central, responding for the NSA Bahrain Commanding Officer, described actions planned to address the recommendations. Therefore, the recommendations are resolved and will remain open until the DoD OIG receives documentation that all agreed upon actions have been completed. The Commander of Navy Region Europe, Africa, and Central, responding for another Commanding Officer, disagreed with the draft recommendation. The DoD OIG considers the recommendation unresolved.

### ***Audit of Munitions Storage in Jordan***

DODIG-2024-126; September 4, 2024

The DoD OIG conducted this audit to determine whether the DoD stored munitions in Jordan, in accordance with applicable safety and security policies. This is the fourth and final report in a series reviewing munitions storage within the U.S. Central Command area of responsibility.

In Jordan, the U.S. Air Forces Central's 332nd Air Expeditionary Wing (AEW) is responsible for managing the safety and security of stored munitions through the 332nd AEW Weapons Safety Division and the 332nd Expeditionary Security Forces Squadron, respectively.

The DoD OIG found that Air Force officials generally stored munitions in accordance with the applicable security and accountability policies. However, Air Force officials could improve the safety of stored munitions.

Specifically, Air Force officials did not manage munitions storage in accordance with approved net explosive weight limits for some munitions storage structures reviewed. In addition, Air Force officials did not maintain continuous awareness of the net explosive weight totals for the munitions stored in all munitions storage structures reviewed.

When Air Force officials do not manage munitions storage in accordance with approved net explosive weight limits, it increases the risk of serious injury, loss of life, and damage to property and reduces the ability to fully use munitions storage structures. Without continuous awareness of the net explosive weight totals of stored munitions, Air Force officials cannot effectively manage explosives safety programs to ensure compliance with munitions safety standards.

The DoD OIG made two recommendations to the Commander of the 332nd AEW. The Commander of U.S. Air Forces Central, responding for the Commander of the 332nd AEW, agreed with the recommendations and described plans to address them. Therefore, the recommendations are resolved and will remain open until the DoD OIG receives documentation that all agreed upon actions have been completed. The DoD OIG also made a recommendation to the Executive Director of the DoD Explosives Safety Board. The Executive Director neither agreed nor disagreed, but provided planned actions to address the recommendation. Therefore, the recommendation is resolved and will remain open until the DoD OIG receives documentation that all agreed upon actions have been completed.

### ***Evaluation of DoD Support to the Development of the Iraqi Security Forces Operational Logistics and Sustainment Capabilities***

DODIG-2024-112; July 24, 2024

The DoD OIG conducted this evaluation to assess the effectiveness of the DoD's support for the development of operational logistics and sustainment capabilities for the Iraqi Security Forces. This report is classified, please see Appendix A. To file a Freedom of Information Act Request, submit a request to FOIA.gov.

## DEPARTMENT OF STATE OFFICE OF INSPECTOR GENERAL

### *Audit of Worldwide Protective Services III Initial Training Consolidation Initiative*

AUD-SI-24-23; July 26, 2024

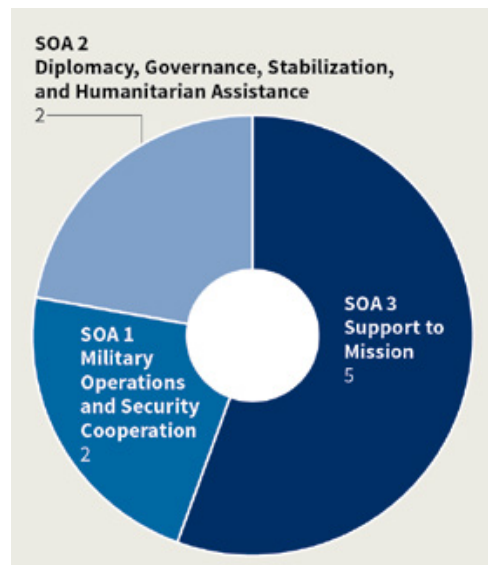
State's Bureau of Diplomatic Security's (DS) Worldwide Protective Services (WPS) program provides contracted guard, personal protection, and support services at diplomatic locations. The WPS II contract required that security vendors train their personnel before assignment to State duties. However, DS found issues with the quality, oversight, and cost of training provided by the security vendors. Once trained, security vendors provide security services in a variety of countries, including Iraq and Ukraine. To address these issues under the subsequent WPS III contract, State awarded a contract in 2021 to provide initial training to WPS III security vendor personnel. State OIG conducted this audit to determine whether DS's efforts to consolidate initial WPS III training enhanced oversight, improved training quality, and achieved envisioned cost savings.

State OIG found that DS enhanced oversight of initial WPS III training by consolidating the training. However, State OIG was unable to determine whether DS improved training quality or achieved envisioned cost savings because DS had not collected data, established baseline data or performance indicators, or developed a methodology to monitor, evaluate, and measure training quality improvements or cost savings.

State OIG made four recommendations to address the deficiencies identified in this report. The relevant State entities concurred with all four recommendations and, at the time the report was issued, State OIG considered all four recommendations resolved, pending further action. The recommendations will remain open until State OIG receives documentation that all agreed upon actions have been completed.

Figure 6.

#### Ongoing and Planned Projects by Strategic Oversight Area



## ONGOING AND PLANNED OVERSIGHT ACTIVITIES

As of September 30, 2024, the Lead IG agencies and their partner agencies had six ongoing and three planned projects related to OIR, including those in the following summaries. Tables 11, 12, and 13, contained in Appendixes F and G, list the titles and objectives for all ongoing and planned projects.

### Military Operations and Security Cooperation

- The **DoD OIG** intends to conduct a follow-up audit related to accountability of equipment provided to Iraqi security and vetted Syrian opposition forces through the Counter-Islamic State of Iraq and Syria Train and Equip Fund.

- **State OIG** is conducting an audit to determine whether State’s efforts to counter Iran-backed groups have been strategically developed and implemented; executed to promote coordination among implementing bureaus, posts, and interagency partners; and designed to measure performance results and inform adjustments in their approach.

## Diplomacy, Governance, Stabilization, and Humanitarian Assistance

- **USAID OIG** is conducting an audit to determine whether USAID has adequately strengthened Iraqi business capacity through economic development activities.
- **USAID OIG** is also conducting an audit to determine whether USAID has designed and implemented policies, procedures, and practices to manage humanitarian assistance supplies warehoused in the United Arab Emirates.

## Support to Mission

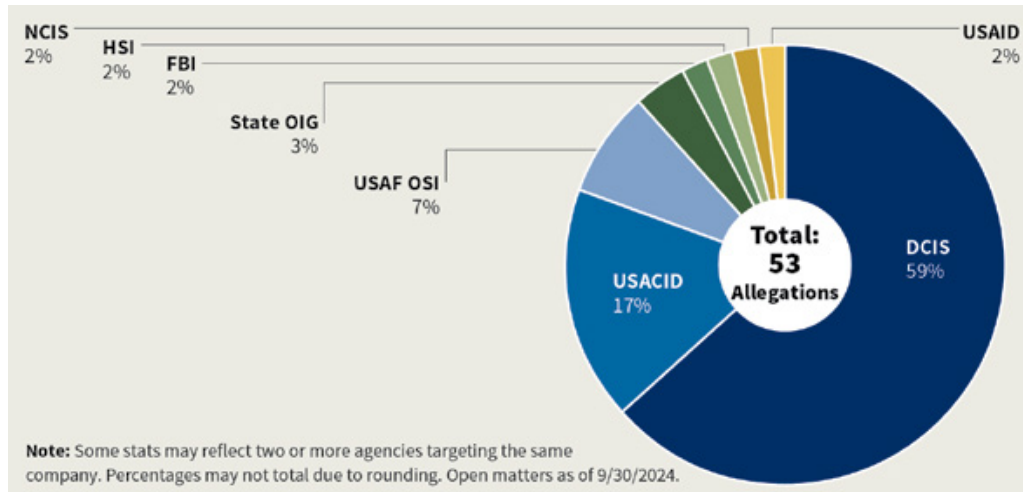
- The **DoD OIG** is conducting an audit to determine whether the DoD requested and received reimbursement from Kuwait for services provided by the DoD.
- **State OIG** is conducting an inspection of the U.S. Embassy in Ankara, Türkiye, and constituent posts to evaluate the programs and operations.

# INVESTIGATIONS

The DoD OIG’s criminal investigative component, the Defense Criminal Investigative Service (DCIS), maintained investigative personnel in Bahrain and Kuwait, where they worked on cases related to OIR. DCIS agents also worked on OIR-related cases from offices in the United States. State OIG and USAID OIG investigators worked on cases related to OIR from Washington, D.C., El Salvador, Germany, Israel, South Africa, and Thailand.

Figure 7.

### OIR-related Investigation Activities, July 1–September 30, 2024



During this quarter, investigative branches of the Lead IG agencies and their partner agencies ended the quarter with 41 open investigations, while 21 investigations were closed. No referrals were made to the Department of Justice during this quarter.

The Lead IG agencies and their partners continue to use the Fraud and Corruption Investigative Working Group (FCIWG) framework to coordinate investigative activities, deconflict potential or common targets, and interact for logistical and legal support. The FCIWG framework consists of representatives from DCIS, State OIG, USAID OIG, the U.S. Army Criminal Investigation Division, the Naval Criminal Investigative Service, the Air Force Office of Special Investigations, and the Federal Bureau of Investigation.

Figure 7 shows the OIR-related investigations being conducted during the quarter.

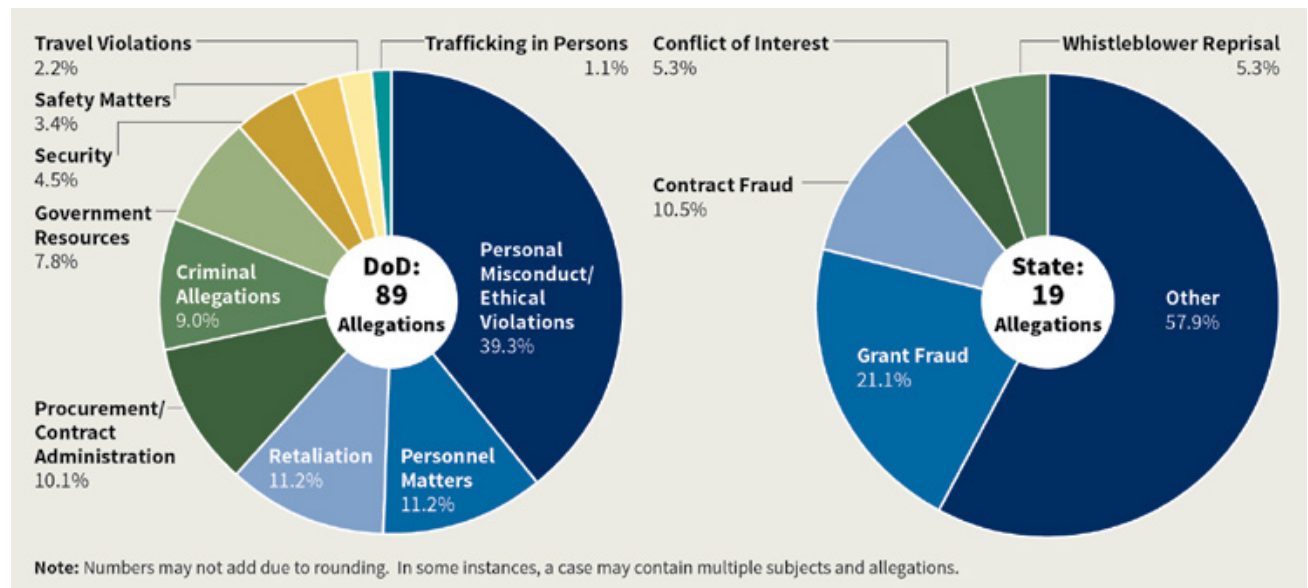
## HOTLINE ACTIVITY

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.

During the quarter, the DoD OIG Hotline received 89 allegations and referred 58 cases related to OIR to Lead IG agencies and other investigative organizations. In some instances, a case may contain multiple subjects and allegations. State OIG received 19 allegations and referred 19 cases and USAID OIG received 63 allegations this quarter and will refer actionable information as appropriate. The majority of allegations during the reporting period related to personal misconduct, procurement and contract administration, personnel matters, and security. (See Figure 8.)

Figure 8.

**DoD and State OIR-related Hotline Activities, July 1–September 30, 2024**









Ammunition for a counter rocket, artillery and mortar air defense system in northern Iraq. (U.S. Army photo)

## APPENDIXES

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## APPENDIX A

# Classified Appendix to this Report

A classified appendix to this report provides additional information on OIR, as noted in several sections of this report. The appendix will be delivered to relevant agencies and congressional committees.

## APPENDIX B

# About the Lead Inspector General

The Inspector General Act of 1978, as amended (codified at 5 U.S.C. Sections 401-424), established in Section 419 the Lead Inspector General (Lead IG) framework for oversight of overseas contingency operations. The Lead IG agencies are the Offices of Inspector General (OIG) of the Department of Defense (DoD), the Department of State (State), and the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID).

Section 419 requires the Council of the Inspectors General on Integrity and Efficiency to appoint a Lead IG from among the Inspector Generals of the Lead IG agencies upon the commencement or designation of a military operation that exceeds 60 days as an overseas contingency operation, or receipt of notification thereof.

Lead IG oversight of the operation “sunset” at the end of the first fiscal year after commencement or designation in which the total amount appropriated for the operation is less than \$100 million.

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

- Submit to Congress on a quarterly basis a report on the contingency operation and to make that report available to the public.
- 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, and evaluations.

## APPENDIX C

# Methodology for Preparing this Lead IG Quarterly Report

This report complies with section 419 of the Inspector General Act of 1978, as amended (codified at 5 U.S.C. Sections 401-424), 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 the Inspectors General for Integrity and Efficiency designated the DoD IG as the Lead IG for Operation Inherent Resolve. State IG is the Associate IG for the operation.

This report covers the period from July 1, 2024, through September 30, 2024. The three Lead IG agencies—DoD OIG, State 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 of 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, State, 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, State OIG, and USAID OIG draft input to the sections of the report related to the activities of their agencies and then participate in editing the entire report. Once assembled, each OIG coordinates a two-phase review process of the report 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, State OIG, and USAID OIG as independent oversight agencies.

## APPENDIX D

# State and USAID Stabilization Programs

### USAID-funded Stabilization Activities in Iraq During the Quarter

Program	Activity Highlights
<p><b>Funding Facility for Stabilization</b> Aims to stabilize areas recently liberated from ISIS by restoring damaged or destroyed essential services and providing the conditions for a dignified, safe, and voluntary return of IDPs to their home.</p> <p>July 2015–June 2027 \$469 million award</p>	<p>USAID is the largest contributor to this 29-donor, multilateral program.</p>
<p><b>Durable Communities and Economic Opportunities</b> Aims to build resilient, adaptive communities and advance economic well-being in target communities in Iraq by addressing underlying drivers of conflict and increasing community leadership of inclusive local development.</p> <p>June 2020–September 2025 (including two option years) \$40 million award</p>	<p>Engaged selected communities impacted by conflict and their leadership to identify and resolve conflict sustainably and peacefully through inclusive dialogue and practical solutions.</p> <p>Provided training and networking services to Iraqi victims of war to help them gain high-quality and sustainable sources of livelihood.</p>
<p><b>Shared Future</b> Supports the durable return for IDPs from the Ninewa Plain, focusing on religious and ethnic minority communities.</p> <p>June 2018–September 2025 \$29 million award</p>	<p>Worked with youth, community, and religious leaders to increase mutual understanding, tolerance, and trust both within their communities and with other communities.</p> <p>Improved vocational and leadership skills and youth livelihood opportunities through targeted vocational training.</p>
<p><b>Supporting the Vulnerable Populations in Iraq</b> September 2018–September 2026 \$57.5 million award</p>	<p>Supported the return of displaced populations from ethnic and religious minorities in Ninewa Plain and western Ninewa through activities related to livelihoods, housing, community peacebuilding, education, and psychosocial services.</p>
<p><b>Strengthening the Ankawa Humanitarian Committee to Response to Communities in Crisis</b> Supports building the capacity of the committee while responding to the ongoing needs of IDPs in Iraq through institutional capacity-building and organizational development.</p> <p>October 1, 2020–September 30, 2024 \$1 million award</p>	<p>Strengthened the capacity of the Ankawa Humanitarian Committee and prepared it to fully engage with USAID on future development initiatives through strengthened capacity and commitment. The committee provides cash support to small entrepreneurs to establish/improve their small businesses.</p>
<p><b>Building Resilience in Children</b> Leverages Ahlan Simsim’s unique approach that combines locally driven, crisis-sensitive and age-appropriate interventions to increase resilience capacities among children, families, and communities impacted by conflict and violence.</p> <p>July 2021–June 2027 \$20 million award</p>	<p>Engaged families and communities impacted by conflict and violence using a combination of original multimedia, direct services, and youth engagement programming to increase resilience capacities that help to counter malign influences and prevent radicalization to violence and violent extremism.</p>

Program	Activity Highlights
<p><b>Iraq Community Resilience Initiative II</b> ICRI Phase II provides direct assistance to Iraqi partners to empower inclusive civic action with the goal of supporting a prosperous and inclusive Iraq. This is achieved by improving positive perceptions of civic engagement among Iraqis and increasing community mobilization around national causes.</p> <p>September 2021–September 2025 \$18 million award</p>	<p>Established partnerships with local government authorities, civil society organizations, media, and community groups in an inclusive manner to quickly implement activities that strengthen community resilience.</p> <p>Encouraged collaborative action across diverse segments of Iraqi society to tackle common issues, such as climate change impacts, lack of essential services, and challenges related to hosting returns of displaced Iraqis, while empowering initiatives and platforms that aid communities in responding to these stressors.</p>
<p><b>Return with Hope</b> February 2024–February 2026 \$5 million award</p>	<p>Provided individualized case-management for Iraqi returnees from al-Hol camp to support their re-integration in their areas of origin and/or areas of return. The program will complement the ongoing work of other organizations already active in the targeted geographic locations and focus on how this program will facilitate the durable return of beneficiaries through the direct provision of specific services, the referral to other available service providers, and building the capacity of social workers from local civil society and relevant government entities.</p>

**Source:** USAID MEB, response to USAID OIG request for information, 9/13/2024.

### State-funded Stabilization Programs in Iraq During the Quarter

Program	Activity Highlights
<p><b>Humanitarian Mine Action</b> Seeks to clear explosive hazards contamination from areas liberated from ISIS to allow for broader stabilization efforts.</p> <p>\$40 million total for FY 2023</p>	<p>Supported the survey, marking and clearance of U.S.-origin munitions in southern Iraq, explosive remnants of war in northern Iraq and the IKR, and explosive hazard contamination in ISIS-liberated areas.</p> <p>Supported information management to help Iraqi authorities task local NGOs to areas of highest need.</p> <p>Delivered education programs to alert IDPs to the dangers of explosive hazards.</p> <p>Provided local capacity building support.</p>

**Source:** State, response to State OIG request for information, 9/20/2024.

## State-funded Stabilization Programs in Syria During the Quarter

Program	Activity Highlights
<p><b>Essential Services and Local Governance</b> Seeks to build trust in local governance entities, making target communities less susceptible to ISIS influence.</p>	<p>Provided operational and infrastructure assistance to municipal vehicle mechanics, firefighters, and emergency response drivers to enhance local council effectiveness in providing essential services across multiple sectors.</p> <p>Conducted capacity building needs assessments of local councils to help determine data driven decisions and enhance overall governance.</p>
<p><b>Civil Society</b> Seeks to help civil society organizations restore essential services and livelihoods in areas liberated from ISIS.</p>	<p>Supported Syrian civil society organizations to deliver essential services, improve livelihoods, represent Syrians, and strengthen social cohesion in communities liberated from ISIS and in communities with members of religious minority groups.</p> <p>Supported an information management unit that coordinated with al-Hol camp management and administration to facilitate the return of more than 500 individuals from al-Hol camp to communities of return, including a data collection dashboard on individual and family demographic data, needs assessments, and feedback upon return. Other programming rehabilitated drinking water and irrigation infrastructure in Dayr az Zawr to address identified barriers to community reintegration benefitting more than 73,000 individuals in five communities.</p> <p>Built the capacity of civil councils, education committees, and community-based organizations to provide remedial literacy and numeracy, technical and vocational training, psychosocial support, teacher training, and rehabilitation/winterization of schools.</p> <p>Worked with families recently returned from displaced persons camps through a social reintegration program focused on building cohesion in the communities.</p>
<p><b>Education</b> Seeks to build the capacity of local councils, education committees, and community-based organizations to provide remedial numeracy, primary education, and psychosocial support for children.</p>	<p>Built the capacity of civil councils, education committees, and community-based organizations to provide remedial literacy and numeracy, technical and vocational training, psychosocial support, teacher training, and rehabilitation/winterization of schools.</p> <p>Provided training in computer skills, solar panel repair, carpentry, and other vocations.</p> <p>Worked with families recently returned from displaced persons camps on social reintegration and remedial education.</p>
<p><b>Support to Independent Media</b> Seeks to promote unbiased, professional, and relevant reporting.</p>	<p>Provided capacity building and operational support to independent northern Syrian media outlets that improved access to accurate, unbiased information and countered violent extremism and disinformation perpetuated by Iran-backed militias, Russia, the Assad regime, and other malign actors. Expanded news programs, gender programming, and programming discussing community issues.</p>
<p><b>Support for Community Security</b> Seeks to build the capacity of internal security forces to provide security that supports, and is supported by, the communities they serve.</p>	<p>Supported the security and the governance bodies that oversee them to deliver community policing services that serves, and are supported by, the population.</p> <p>Rehabilitated security stations; held engagements between officers and local community members; and rehabilitated streetlights in under-served areas to address a primary security concern of local communities.</p> <p>Provided a holistic approach to community security, supporting officer trainings, building the capacity of civilian authorities, promoting community engagement, and supporting public safety initiatives.</p>

Program	Activity Highlights
<p><b>Humanitarian Mine Action</b> Seeks to clear explosive hazards contamination from areas liberated from ISIS to allow for broader stabilization efforts.</p>	<p>Surveyed, marked, and cleared explosive remnants of war and IEDs from key critical infrastructure sites and areas liberated from ISIS.</p> <p>Delivered explosive ordnance risk education to displaced persons and at-risk communities.</p> <p>Provided local capacity building support.</p>

**Source:** State, response to State OIG request for information, 9/20/2024.

### USAID-funded Stabilization Activities in Syria During the Quarter

Program	Activity Highlights
<p><b>Elections and Political Processes</b> Seeks to enhance participation of citizens, civil society, and other stakeholders in transitional or electoral processes in Syria and improve inclusive citizen-governance relationships in northeastern Syria.</p> <p>Duration: 4 years (ends August 2025) \$12 million award</p>	<p><b>Training and Capacity Building:</b> Provided training and capacity building to 40 local actors trained in best practices for transparent, accountable, and effective local governance.</p> <p><b>Community Dialogue:</b> Engaged with Syrian stakeholders resulted in tangible action from civil society organizations (CSOs) to hold authorities accountable. Facilitated 37 dialogues and roundtables to date on issue identification, effective communications, conflict analysis, and negotiations and mediation for local communities.</p> <p><b>Advocacy Campaign:</b> Worked with a group of CSOs on 11 new campaigns with a range of ideas and objectives focusing on addressing al-Hol returnees and the wider community's key needs and priorities.</p>
<p><b>Growing Agriculture and Incomes in Syria (GROW)</b> Seeks to improve agricultural production, increase food security, and increase incomes for farmers and agribusiness in non-regime areas of Syria.</p> <p>Duration: 3 years base with 2 option years (ends August 2028) \$42 million award</p>	<p><b>Baseline development:</b> Developed a rolling baseline methodology for the program during this quarter and developed a baseline report.</p> <p><b>Expressions of Interest for Grants:</b> Using a market-system development approach, published an Expression of Interest for grants under this contract and developed concept notes for potential grant funding in a co-creation process with businesses in Dayr az Zawr, Hasakah, and Raqqa provinces.</p> <p><b>Value Chain selection:</b> After conducting an in-depth value chain assessment, narrowed down selected value chains to initially work in, including tomato, olive oil, and livestock (dairy and red meat).</p> <p><b>Coordination with EMS to support Private Sector:</b> With USAID support, a private sector enterprise in Syria is expected to create more than 200 new jobs, generate \$1.2 million in annual sales revenue, and spur increased value chain competitiveness. The parties will collaborate to develop new business activities focused on greenhouse technology for high-value vegetable production.</p>

(continued on next page)

Program	Activity Highlights
<p><b>Syria Livelihoods Project</b> Increases equitable income generation and access to services for women, persons with disabilities and other vulnerable groups, and creates an inclusive enabling environment for economic recovery</p> <p>Duration: 5 years (July 2020–July 2025) \$14.55 million award</p>	<p><b>Career Opportunities:</b> Placed of 463 women to date in paid internship opportunities with 408 active internships ongoing. Placement examples include retail, tailoring, sales, hairdressing, and food and beverage.</p> <p><b>Career Guidance:</b> Provided career guidance and job readiness training sessions to 1,857 women to date. These sessions assist women in identifying their livelihood assistance needs and potential career pathways, while assessing areas of interest and recognizing marketable or transferable skills and experience.</p> <p><b>Accelerating Inclusive Economic Recovery:</b> Registered 5,847 persons with disabilities seeking support in the case management system. Supported 150 small business owners with disabilities to help them start-up or grow their green businesses.</p> <p><b>Improving Services for Returnees and Host Communities:</b> Registered 1,922 al-Hol women returnees and host community women seeking livelihoods support to track, register, and match women with economic opportunities including paid internships, financial support to start-up or expand a small business, and technical and vocational education training.</p>
<p><b>Economic Management for Stabilization</b> Private sector-led growth and investment for job creation, reduce corruption, and improve the transparency of regional governing authorities, and ultimately reduce the dependency on foreign assistance in non-regime held areas. The program enlists senior advisors to initiate policy dialogue and advisory support in critical economic governance and private sector-led growth areas.</p> <p>Duration: 3 years (ends September 2024) \$14 million award</p>	<p><b>Private Sector Engagement/Competitiveness Enhancement:</b> Continued to work with high-potential firms in different economic sectors to increase their sales, production, and competitiveness and thus creating more sustainable job opportunities. To date, the program helped create more than 2,454 jobs and is expected to create more than 250 jobs by the end of September 2024.</p> <p><b>FDI Attraction Support:</b> Facilitated a partnership with a local firm to implement a project in climate smart agriculture that aims to establish 50 greenhouses using cutting-edge technologies to produce more than 2,000 tons of fresh food in the upcoming three years and provide seedlings and saplings to more than 1,000 local farmers. This project will include a foreign investment of \$400,000 to be utilized in late 2024.</p>



Program	Activity Highlights
<p><b>Essential Services, Good Governance, and Economic Recovery</b> Aims to restore essential services, including power, water, and health, strengthen inclusive, participatory, accountable, and transparent governance, and restore livelihoods and revive local economies in the agriculture and energy sector in non-regime held areas in northeastern Syria.</p> <p>Duration: 5 years (May 2020–May 2025) \$49.9 million award</p>	<p><b>Reintegration of Syrian Returnees from al-Hol in Raqqa–Case Management System and Capacity Building:</b> Tracking and monitored returnees through the established case management system and is linking the returnees to a suite of social, economic, and property services to facilitate reintegration. As of mid-September, the program made 931 referrals and closed 461 referrals during the quarter.</p> <p><b>Reintegration of Syrian Returnees from al-Hol in Raqqa–Service Provision:</b> Provided transitional shelter support for returnees and is enhancing electricity provision in Raqqa city. With program support, the RCC Energy Committee is installing 23 new electrical transformers at existing transformation centers.</p> <p><b>Reintegration of Syrian Returnees from al-Hol–Case Management System and Capacity Building:</b> Continued case management capacity development activities with the Social Affairs and Labor Committees in Raqqa and Dayr az Zawr.</p> <p><b>Establishing a chick hatchery and egg production farm in Raqqa:</b> Continued civil rehabilitation of the facilities.</p> <p><b>Restoring grid network electricity to a public wheat mill in Dayr az Zawr:</b> Provided and installed a new transformer and civil rehabilitation of the transformer building.</p> <p><b>Reestablishment of an Oxygen Refilling Plant:</b> The Jazeera Provincial Health Commission completed civil rehabilitation, electrical works, and the provision and installation of a medical-grade oxygen production line on the premises of Hasakah National Hospital. This activity restored the local authority’s ability to produce medical-grade oxygen after Turkish airstrikes destroyed the oxygen bottling plant that was previously established in Qamishli city. The plant has the capacity to generate 100 medical-grade oxygen cylinders per day when the plant is in operation for 8 hours a day.</p> <p><b>Enhancing Provision of Water in Southern Hasakah:</b> The General Water Directorate in Hasakah completed the rehabilitation of Areeshah Desalination Station and Sabe’ Zlam Desalination Station. The activity included rehabilitation of the two water stations (civil works, mechanical works, electrical works), provision and installation of new pumps, and the provision and installation of a solar photovoltaic system for the Sabe’ Zlam Desalination Station.</p> <p><b>Establishment of Hasakah Table Eggs and Fertilized Eggs Production Farms:</b> The General Directorate of Agriculture and Animal Welfare in Hasakah are operating farm facilities and the activities are in their 1-year warranty period.</p>

Source: USAID MEB, response to USAID OIG request for information, 9/13/2024.

## APPENDIX E

## State and USAID Humanitarian Assistance Programs

## State-funded Humanitarian Assistance Activities in Iraq During the Quarter

Program	Activity Highlights
<p><b>International Organization for Migration</b> Provides a comprehensive response to the humanitarian needs of migrants, IDPs, returnees, and host communities</p>	<p>Worked to improve the conditions for dignified and voluntary returns to areas of origin, local integration, and settlement in new locations, with assistance on civil documentation and legal issues, social cohesion support, financial assistance, health consultations, and protection monitoring and advocacy.</p> <p>Through the Displacement Tracking Matrix, collected data on displacement, conditions in areas of return, and main barriers to return for IDPs and returnees.</p>
<p><b>UNHCR (UN Refugee Agency)</b> Promotes and protects the rights of refugees and other displaced persons, provides assistance, and seek durable solutions.</p>	<p>Led the humanitarian response for Syrian refugees in Iraq in close coordination with humanitarian actors and government authorities, to protect and assist refugees and asylum-seekers.</p> <p>Supported activities for refugees, IDPs, and persons at risk of statelessness related to registration and civil documentation; protection monitoring and advocacy; legal aid; health; shelter and camp management; psychosocial support; child protection; prevention, risk mitigation, and response to gender-based violence and sexual exploitation and abuse; among other services.</p>
<p><b>Other International Organizations</b> Support refugees, IDPs, returnees, and other vulnerable communities in Iraq with a range of humanitarian assistance and services.</p>	<p>Provided services to refugees, IDPs, returnees, and other vulnerable communities including support for health, mental health and psychosocial support (MHPSS) services, legal assistance, shelter, prevention and response to gender-based violence, child protection issues, and more.</p>

**Source:** State, response to State OIG request for information, 9/20/2024.

### USAID-funded Humanitarian Assistance Activities in Iraq During the Quarter

Program	Activity Highlights
<b>Water, Sanitation, and Hygiene</b>	Supplied an IDP camp with water sourced through camp boreholes; provided solid waste management and desludging services; provided water, sanitation, and hygiene promotion and awareness raising sessions; distributed non-food items; and maintained water, sanitation, and hygiene facilities in IDP camps. Supported the formation of a WASH Working Group, facilitation of WWG coordination meetings, and capacity building training for governmental institutions.
<b>Shelter and Settlements</b>	Provided critical shelter upgrades and a distribution of non-food item kits to vulnerable internally displaced person households in Diyala province. The critical shelter upgrades included rehabilitations to windows, doors, ceilings, locks, corridors, hand rails on stairs, and hand-washing basins. In addition, families received a distribution of a kit that included blankets, bedsheets, mattresses, a stove, jerry cans, a kerosene heater, an electrical heater, a kitchen set and a carpet.
<b>Protection</b>	Provided awareness sessions on gender-based violence and protection from sexual exploitation; case management services; individual protection assistance and referrals through a protection center in Ninewa province and other organizations. Provided recreational, educational, and structured PSS sessions, such as MHPSS awareness sessions, case management services, and children’s resilience sessions, through a protection center.
<b>Food Assistance</b>	Supplied an IDP camp with water sourced through camp boreholes; provided solid waste management and desludging services; provided water, sanitation, and hygiene promotion and awareness raising sessions; distributed non-food items; and maintained water, sanitation, and hygiene facilities in IDP camps. Supported the formation of a WASH Working Group (WWG), facilitation of WWG coordination meetings, and capacity building training for governmental institutions.

**Note:** Activity highlights are illustrative examples and do not represent the full spectrum of USAID BHA activities conducted during the quarter. As a part of the U.S. Government response, USAID BHA funding also supports health, protection, and shelter and settlements programs for vulnerable populations in conflict-affected areas of Iraq.

**Source:** USAID BHA, response to USAID OIG request for information, 9/13/2024.

## APPENDIX F

# Ongoing Oversight Projects

Tables 11 and 12 list the titles and objectives for Lead IG and partner agencies' ongoing oversight projects related to OIR

Table 11.

### Ongoing Oversight Projects Related to OIR by Lead IG Agencies, as of September 30, 2024

#### DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE OFFICE OF INSPECTOR GENERAL

##### ***Audit of DoD Reimbursement from the State of Kuwait in Accordance with the Defense Cooperation Agreement***

To determine whether the DoD requested and received reimbursement from the State of Kuwait for services provided by the DoD in accordance with the Defense Cooperation Agreement.

#### DEPARTMENT OF STATE OFFICE OF INSPECTOR GENERAL

##### ***Audit of Department of State Efforts to Counter Iran-Backed Groups***

To determine whether the Department of State's efforts to counter Iran-backed groups have been 1) strategically developed and implemented with goals and objectives; 2) executed to promote coordination among implementing bureaus, posts, and interagency partners; and 3) designed to measure performance results and inform adjustments in its approach.

##### ***Inspection of Embassy Ankara, Türkiye, and Constituent Posts***

To evaluate the programs and operations of the U.S. Embassy in Ankara, Türkiye, and constituent posts.

##### ***Classified Inspection of Embassy Ankara, Türkiye, and Constituent Posts***

To evaluate the programs and operations of the U.S. Embassy in Ankara, Türkiye, and constituent posts.

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

##### ***Audit of USAID/Iraq's Economic Development Activities***

To determine the extent to which USAID has generated employment among poor households and communities, strengthened economic capacity, and improved the Iraq business environment through economic development activities.

##### ***Audit of USAID's Management of the Bureau for Humanitarian Assistance Warehouse in the United Arab Emirates***

To determine the extent to which USAID has designed and implemented policies, procedures, and practices to manage humanitarian assistance supplies warehoused in the United Arab Emirates.

Table 12.

### Ongoing Oversight Projects Related to OIR by Lead IG Partner Agencies, as of September 30, 2024

#### ARMY AUDIT AGENCY

##### ***Audit of International Cooperative Administrative Support Services Program***

To determine whether International Cooperative Administrative Support Services payments were appropriate and supported.

##### ***Operational Contract Support Planning***

To determine if the Army's operational contract support planning and requirements development processes support mission readiness.

## APPENDIX G

# Planned Oversight Projects

Table 13 lists the titles and objectives for Lead IG and partner agencies' ongoing oversight projects related to OIR.

Table 13.

### Planned Oversight Projects Related to OIR by Lead IG Agencies, as of September 30, 2024

#### DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE OFFICE OF INSPECTOR GENERAL

##### ***Follow up Audit of the Counter-Islamic State of Iraq and Syria Train and Equip Fund***

To determine the effectiveness of the DoD's response to the recommendations in Report No. DODIG-2020-061, "Audit of the DoD's Accountability of Counter-Islamic State of Iraq and Syria Train and Equip Fund Equipment Designated for Syria," February 13, 2020, in improving the accountability and safeguarding of equipment provided to Iraqi Security and Vetted Syrian Opposition forces through the Counter-Islamic State of Iraq and Syria Train and Equip Fund.



## ACRONYMS

Acronym	
AEW	air expeditionary wing
BHA	USAID Bureau for Humanitarian Assistance
CJTF-OIR	Combined Joint Task Force–Operation Inherent Resolve
CTEF	Counter-ISIS Train and Equip Fund
CTS	Counterterrorism Service
DAANES	Democratic Autonomous Administration of North and East Syria
DHS	Department of Homeland Security
DIA	Defense Intelligence Agency
DNGO	Department of Non-Governmental Organizations
DoD	Department of Defense
DoJ	Department of Justice
DS	State Bureau of Diplomatic Security
EUM	end-use monitoring
EEUM	enhanced end-use monitoring
FMF	Foreign Military Financing
FY	fiscal year
IDP	internally displaced person
IED	improvised explosive device
IHEC	Independent High Electoral Commission
IKR	Iraqi Kurdistan Region
IMF	International Monetary Fund
IOM	International Organization for Migration
IqAF	Iraqi Air Force
IRGC	Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps
ISF	Iraqi Security Forces
ISR	intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance
JOC-I	Joint Operations Command–Iraq
JOCAT-N	Joint Operations Command Advisor Team–North
JSCD	U.S.–Iraq Joint Security Cooperation Dialogue
KCL	Kurdish Coordination Line
KDP	Kurdistan Democratic Party

Acronym	
KRG	Kurdistan Regional Government
MAG	Military Advisory Group
MoD	Ministry of Defense
Mol	Ministry of Interior
MoPA	Ministry of Peshmerga Affairs
MoPOC	Ministry of Peshmerga Operations Command
MoU	memorandum of understanding
NGO	nongovernmental organization
NSA	naval support activity
OIG	Office of Inspector General
OIR	Operation Inherent Resolve
OUSD(P)	Office of the Under Secretary of Defense for Policy
PKK	Kurdistan Workers' Party
PMC	Popular Mobilization Committee
PRM	State Bureau of Population, Refugees, and Migration
PUK	Patriotic Union of Kurdistan
RGB	Regional Guard Brigade
SDC	Syrian Democratic Council
SDF	Syrian Democratic Forces
SFA	Syrian Free Army
SFAB	Security Force Assistance Brigade
SFC	Support Force Command
SOAG	Special Operations Advisory Group
State	Department of State
Treasury	Department of the Treasury
UAS	unmanned aerial system
UN	United Nations
UNDP	UN Development Program
UNHCR	UN High Commissioner for Refugees
UNICEF	UN Children's Agency
UNSCR	UN Security Council Resolution
USAID	U.S. Agency for International Development
USCENTCOM	the U.S. Central Command
WPS	Worldwide Protective Services

## ENDNOTES

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2. ODASD(ME), response to DoD OIG request for information, vetting comment, 7/19/2022.
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