



# OPERATION INHERENT RESOLVE

LEAD INSPECTOR GENERAL REPORT TO THE UNITED STATES CONGRESS



OCTOBER 1, 2022–DECEMBER 31, 2022

**On the Cover**

(Top row): At Al-Asad Air Base, Iraq, a U.S. Army Soldier shoots targets (U.S. Army photo); U.S. Air Force Airmen load a U.S. Army M1A2 Abrams Main Battle Tank into a U.S. C-17A Globemaster III aircraft (U.S. Air Force photo); Syrian Internal Security Forces training academy members at an Asayish Law Enforcement Training graduation ceremony (U.S. Army Reserve); Mine-Resistant Ambush Protected Vehicles at an undisclosed location in Southwest Asia (U.S. Air Force photo). (Bottom row): U.S. Army Soldiers fire a M777 Howitzer during an operational rehearsal exercise at a mission support site in Syria (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, as amended.

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

This quarterly report describes the activities of the U.S. Government in support of OIR as well as the work of the Department of Defense (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 October 1 through December 31, 2022. 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.

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**Nicole L. Angarella**  
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A U.S. Army M777 Howitzer is fired during an operational rehearsal exercise at a mission support site in Syria. (U.S. Army photo)

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Syrian Internal Security Forces training academy members at an Asayish Law Enforcement Training graduation ceremony (U.S. Army Reserve)

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Operation Inherent Resolve (OIR) mission is to advise, assist, and enable partner forces until they can independently defeat ISIS in designated areas of Iraq and Syria, in order to set conditions for long-term security cooperation frameworks in Iraq and a secure and stable situation in northeastern Syria.<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>

**ISIS capabilities remained “significantly degraded” by the steady removal of ISIS leaders in Iraq and Syria but the group continued to spread its ideology and conduct attacks.**<sup>3</sup> ISIS attacks continued to decline compared to the same period in 2021, reflecting a “strategy of survival.”<sup>4</sup> The attacks targeted local security forces, mostly using simple tactics and small arms.<sup>5</sup> ISIS remained focused on bolstering its ranks by freeing its fighters from detention and indoctrinating and recruiting children at the al-Hol displaced persons camp in Syria.<sup>6</sup>

**Türkiye, Iran, Russia, and the Syrian regime continued to impact the OIR campaign.** In Syria, the Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) paused counter-ISIS operations due to Turkish airstrikes and Turkish preparations for a potential incursion.<sup>7</sup> While the SDF maintained security at detention centers and at displacement camps, Combined Joint Task Force-Operation Inherent Resolve (CJTF-OIR) noted that operational pauses provide ISIS opportunity to reconstitute.<sup>8</sup> In response to the potential Turkish ground incursion, the Syrian regime and probably its Russian backers reinforced positions in northern Syria.<sup>9</sup> Russian aircraft increased air violations of deconfliction protocols with Coalition forces that are designed to prevent an inadvertent collision or clash.<sup>10</sup> Iran-aligned militias continued to pause attacks on U.S. and Coalition forces in Iraq, though small-scale indirect fire attacks continued against Coalition personnel in Syria.<sup>11</sup>

**Coalition and the Syrian partner forces increased counter-ISIS raids following the end of the operational pause on December 8.** In December, Coalition forces conducted multiple unilateral raids in Syria targeting ISIS leaders and senior operatives.<sup>12</sup> On December 29, the SDF launched a major operation to target ISIS cells believed involved in recent attacks near al-Hol and areas south of Qamishli.<sup>13</sup> The SDF and Coalition forces resumed joint operations as well as training to conduct conventional and counter-terrorism operations and to guard detention facilities and displacement camps.<sup>14</sup> Coalition forces also continued to train and arm the Syrian Free Army, which operates in the Deconfliction Zone around the At Tanf Garrison.<sup>15</sup>

**Iraqi partner forces continued counter-ISIS operations, often without Coalition support.** The Iraqi Security Forces (ISF) completed the eighth phase of Operation Willing Resolve, a multi-force operation to clear ISIS from provinces north and west of

## Lead IG Oversight Activities

State OIG completed one report related to OIR during the quarter, related to its inspection of the programs and operation of the U.S Embassy in Kuwait City, Kuwait. As of December 31, 2022, 11 projects related to OIR were ongoing and 1 project related to OIR was planned.

During this quarter, investigative branches of the Lead IG agencies and their partner agencies closed 7 investigations, initiated 7 investigations, and coordinated on 77 open investigations. The investigations involve a variety of alleged crimes, including procurement fraud, corruption, grant fraud, theft, program irregularities, computer intrusions, and human trafficking.

Each Lead IG agency maintains its own hotline to receive complaints specific to its agency. During the quarter, the DoD OIG hotline investigator referred 59 cases to Lead IG agencies or other investigative organizations.

Baghdad.<sup>16</sup> The ISF again conducted an airstrike on an ISIS target, independent of Coalition support, complemented with supporting artillery fire.<sup>17</sup> The ISF continued to develop its information operations capability, but a new center to coordinate those operations remained understaffed.<sup>18</sup> Coalition advisors helped the Iraqi Counterterrorism Service develop operational intelligence, conduct successful operations, and improve conviction rates.<sup>19</sup>

**ISIS-related activities and stalled repatriations continued to endanger residents of displacement camps in Syria.** ISIS-related violence, including killings, at the al-Hol camp decreased significantly following a Coalition-enabled SDF counter-ISIS operation in September and a series of U.S.-funded camp security improvements.<sup>20</sup> However, ISIS continued conducting illegal activities inside the NGO-operated humanitarian camp, enforcing rules and ideology and operating smuggling networks.<sup>21</sup> The SDF continued to conduct raids and arrest suspects in al-Hol.<sup>22</sup> The Department of State (State) said it remained concerned that such security measures can impede and take precedence over humanitarian assistance in the camp.<sup>23</sup> The U.S. Government continued to stress that the only practical long-term solution is the voluntary return and repatriation of camp residents to their home areas in Syria or countries of origin.<sup>24</sup> However, few of the camp's approximately 54,000 residents left during the quarter: 64 Syrians left in October and 128 third-country nationals were repatriated to Germany, France, the United Kingdom, Russia, Australia, Canada, and Netherlands.<sup>25</sup> In November 2022, the Iraqi government temporarily suspended repatriations from the al-Hol camp but resumed them in January.<sup>26</sup>

**The U.S. Government continued to respond to complex challenges in Iraq and Syria, including displacement, drought, and disease.** Iraqi political leaders announced a new government in October, following a year of political deadlock. State said that the onus is on the Iraqi government to enact bold policies and reforms that concretely improve lives and reinforce democratic values and good governance.<sup>27</sup> In Syria, drought conditions continued and a cholera outbreak continued to spread, with displacement camps at the highest risk.<sup>28</sup> However, delayed funding and ongoing conflict—including Turkish airstrikes—continued to impact U.S.-funded stabilization and humanitarian assistance efforts.<sup>29</sup>

**The Iraqi Security Forces (ISF) completed the eighth phase of Operation Willing Resolve, a multi-force operation to clear ISIS from provinces north and west of Baghdad.**









U.S. Soldiers on patrol at Al-Asad Air Base, Iraq. (U.S. Army photo)

# MISSION UPDATE

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Norwegian Soldiers fire an 87mm recoilless rifle during an operational exercise at Al-Asad Air Base, Iraq. (U.S. Army photo)

## MISSION UPDATE

### INTRODUCTION

Operation Inherent Resolve (OIR) is a U.S.-led mission implemented by the Global Coalition to Defeat ISIS to advise, assist, and enable local Iraqi and vetted Syrian security forces until they can independently defeat ISIS in designated areas of Iraq and Syria. The mission seeks to set the conditions for a long-term security cooperation framework in Iraq and a secure and stable situation in northeastern Syria.<sup>30</sup> The mission is executed by the Combined Joint Task Force–Operation Inherent Resolve (CJTF-OIR), which comprises 25 troop-contributing Coalition countries that work with the Iraqi government and vetted partner forces in both countries.<sup>31</sup>

The OIR campaign is organized around four lines of effort. (See Figure 1.) These four lines of effort seek to support the U.S. Government’s wider security and stabilization objectives in the region.<sup>32</sup> In Iraq, the U.S. Government promotes a strong democracy, inclusive economic growth, independence from malign influence, a resilient Iraqi Kurdistan Region (IKR), and continued Iraqi cooperation with regional neighbors to enhance security, critical infrastructure, and economic development.<sup>33</sup> In Syria, the U.S. Government seeks to ensure the enduring defeat of ISIS, advance a durable political solution to the Syrian conflict, support humanitarian access, preserve ceasefires, and promote justice and accountability.<sup>34</sup>

Figure 1.

#### OIR Lines of Effort

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

The campaign is currently in Phase IV of the operation. 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. SUPPORT THE IRAQI COUNTER-ISIS CAPABILITY

Support the Iraqi government’s capacity to lead military operations against ISIS and ultimately do so independently.

##### 4. MAXIMIZE COALITION EFFORTS IN THE INFORMATION ENVIRONMENT

Through press releases and social media, the Coalition reinforces the messages that support our regional partners and combats disinformation from ISIS.

Source: CJTF-OIR, response to DoD OIG request for information, 23.1 OIR 004, 12/21/2022; ODASD(ME), vetting comment, 1/24/2023.

## PROGRESS AND CHALLENGES DURING THE QUARTER

In its 2022 Campaign Plan, CJTF-OIR outlined desired end states for OIR and the ways and means to achieve those end states. While the end states are classified, CJTF-OIR said that generally, the end states include: 1) ISIS is territorially defeated and unable to threaten regional security and Coalition homelands; and 2) areas liberated from ISIS in Iraq and Syria are stabilized, meaning the Iraqi government and appropriate authorities in Syria are able to prevent an ISIS resurgence.<sup>35</sup>

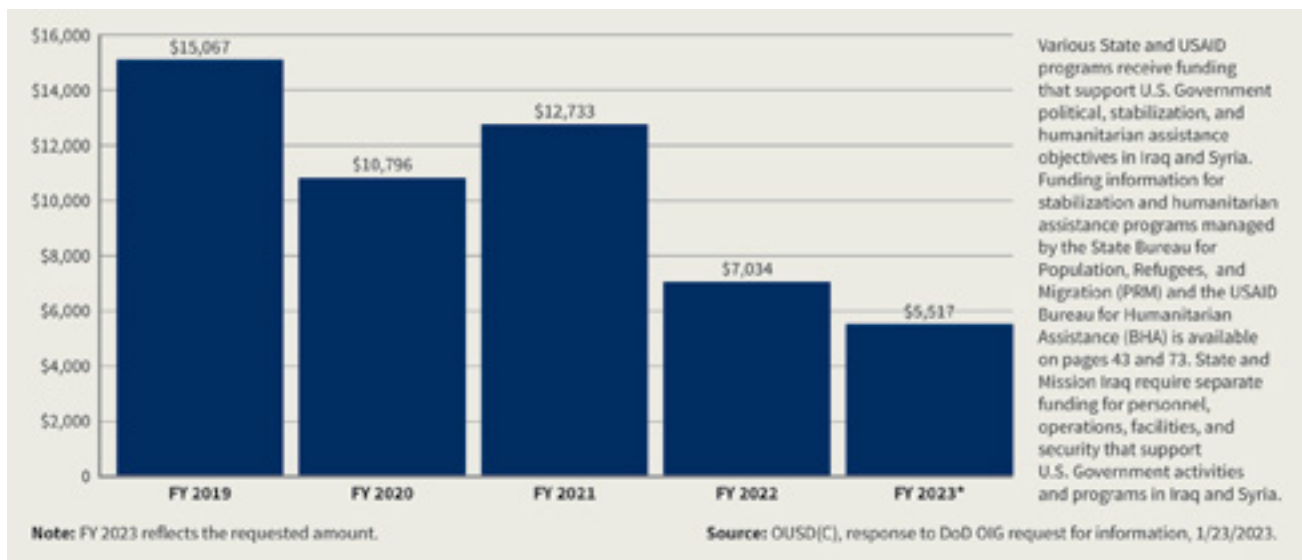
ISIS remained territorially defeated in Iraq and Syria during the quarter, but ISIS fighters continued to conduct low-level attacks on partner security forces.<sup>36</sup> ISIS senior leadership in Iraq and Syria remained unable but committed to directing external operations against the U.S. homeland.<sup>37</sup> During the quarter, the Commander of the U.S. Central Command (USCENTCOM), General Michael “Erik” Kurilla, continued to express concern about ISIS recruitment efforts targeting detention facilities and youth in displacement camps.<sup>38</sup> (See pages 10-11.)

Areas of the region liberated from ISIS—particularly in Syria—are not yet stabilized. Tens of thousands Iraqis and Syrians remain displaced, and their home communities continue to experience the effects of conflict, disease, and inadequate or non-existent public services.<sup>39</sup> In Iraq, security forces continued to demonstrate increasing, if incremental, gains in their ability to defeat ISIS independently.<sup>40</sup> The creation of a new government after more than a year-long stalemate presents an opportunity for progress on security sector reform, delivery of public services, economic growth, and other pressing priorities.<sup>41</sup>

Details on progress and challenges related to specific DoD, State, and USAID objectives are provided throughout this report.

Figure 2.

### DoD Enacted Funding for OIR FY 2019-FY 2023, in \$ Millions



# STATUS OF ISIS

USCENTCOM assessed that ISIS capabilities are **“significantly degraded,”** with the removal of multiple senior leaders from the battlefield but U.S. and partner force operations must continue. ISIS’s **“vile ideology remains unconstrained”** and the tens of thousands of ISIS fighters in detention in Syria and Iraq are **“a literal ISIS army”** in waiting. The more than 25,000 children in the al-Hol displacement camp in Syria are **“prime targets for ISIS radicalization”** and are viewed by ISIS as the **“potential next generation of ISIS.”**

Source: USCENTCOM, press release, “CENTCOM—Year in Review 2022: The Fight Against ISIS,” 12/29/2022.

## ISIS Attack Trends

ISIS claimed 72 attacks in Iraq and Syria during the quarter, continuing an **overall decline** from the same period in 2021.

ISIS was **unable to maintain a steady tempo** of operations in Iraq and Syria due to counterterrorism operations by Coalition partner forces.

ISIS likely adopted a survival strategy: attacks mostly consisted of **simple IED or small arms attacks** targeting local security forces.

## IRAQ

ISIS attacks continued to decline in Iraq. Diyala, Kirkuk, and Anbar provinces saw substantial reductions in the share of attacks compared to a year ago.

While ISIS’s momentum suffered, ISIS fighters continued to conduct **lethal, moderately complex attacks** against the ISF and civilians.

A KSF commander was killed in October after a KSF vehicle struck an IED during a counter-ISIS operation.

ISIS claimed **back-to-back attacks** in December: the bombing of an Iraqi Federal Police convoy near Kirkuk and an attack in Diyala province that killed eight civilians.

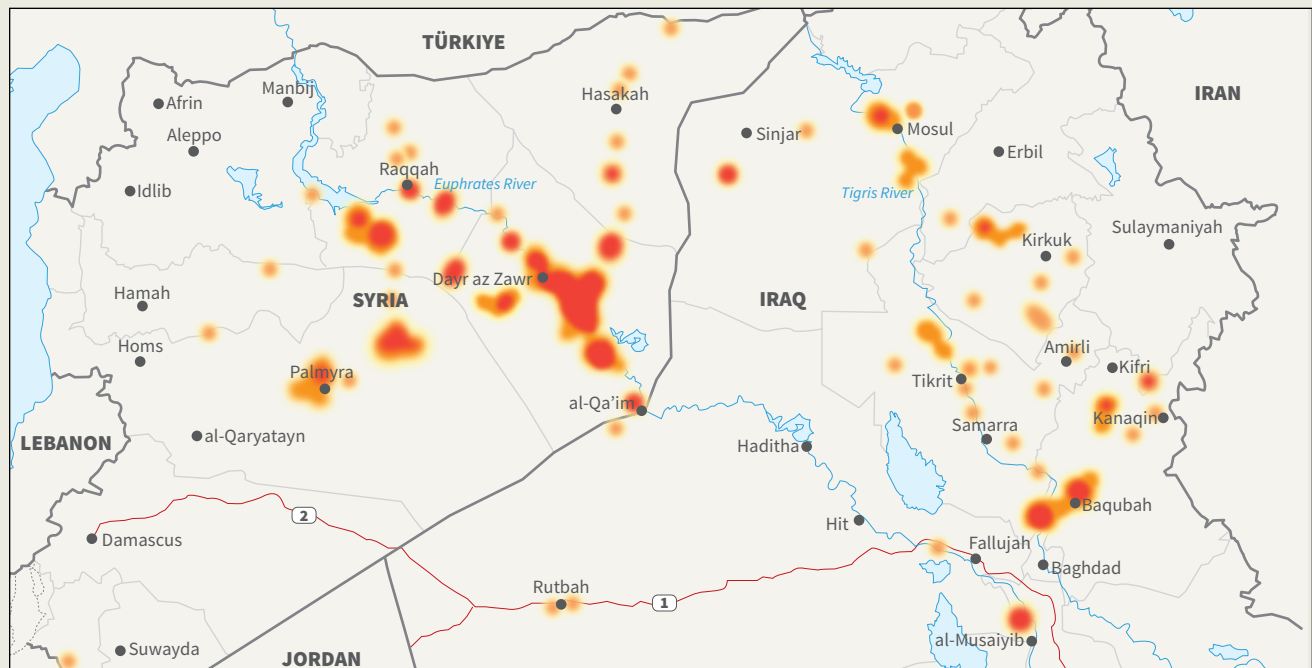
## SYRIA

ISIS increased attacks in Syria in December coinciding with the conclusion of a pause in SDF counter-ISIS operations to address hostilities with Türkiye.

There was a **noticeable rise in IED attacks** compared to a year ago.

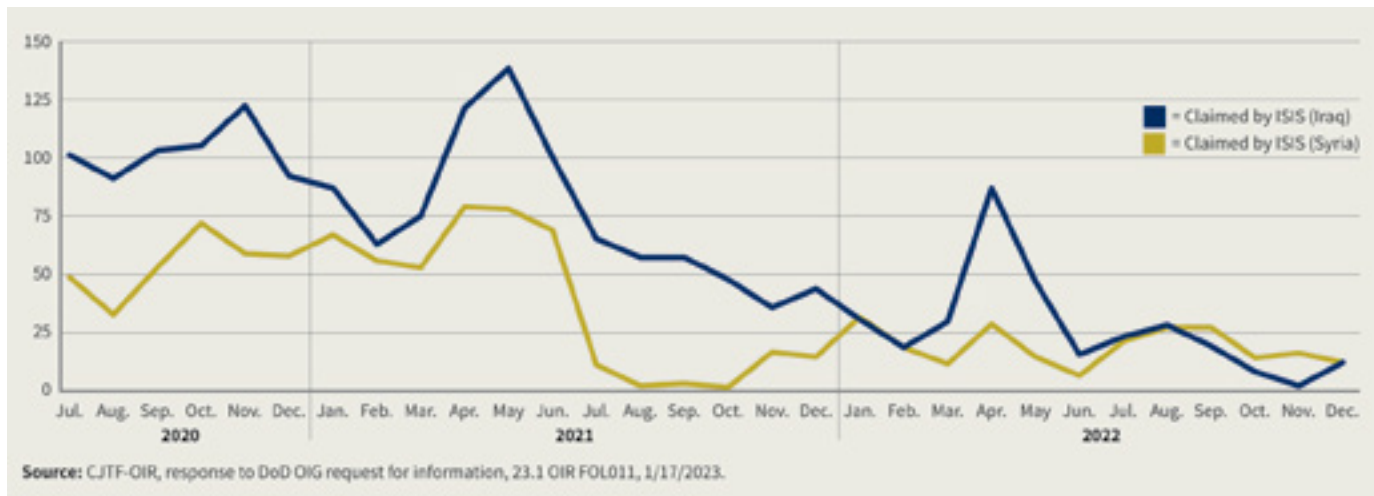
In October, ISIS briefly **captured a key oil field town** in Homs governorate from Syrian regime and Russian Wagner Group forces. In December, ISIS attacked SDF headquarters in Raqqah and allegedly **killed oil field workers** traveling in a bus convoy in Dayr az Zawr governorate.

ISIS continued efforts to regenerate combat forces by **exploiting vulnerable populations** in displacement camps in northeastern Syria.



Sources: Armed Conflict Location and Event Data Project (ACLED), data for battles, explosions, and attacks on civilians by Islamic State (Iraq and Syria), 1/1/2022–12/31/2022; Janes Terrorism and Insurgency Centre, data for non-state armed group attacks, statements, and actions by Islamic State in Iraq and Syria, 10/1/2022–12/31/2022; Enabling Peace in Iraq Center, “Iraq Security and Humanitarian Monitor,” 9/29/2022–12/22/2022; ODASD(ME), vetting comment, 1/24/2023 and DIA, vetting comment, 1/24/2023.

## ISIS Attacks by Month, July 2020–December 2022



### ISIS Capability Assessment

**LEADERSHIP:** Syrian opposition forces killed ISIS emir Abu al-Hassan al-Quraishi in mid-October in Dar'a governorate. Al-Quraishi had succeeded the ISIS chief killed by American forces in February 2022. The DIA said that successive leadership losses in 2022 at least **temporarily degraded** ISIS's local insurgent and external attack capabilities, and al-Quraishi's killing probably accelerated the shift towards a new generation of senior ISIS leaders.

**STRATEGY AND OBJECTIVES:** Prison breaks remained a global priority for ISIS. The DIA said similar to the January 2022 ISIS attack on the Ghwayran Detention Facility, ISIS **may attempt more breakout attacks** on displacement camps and detention facilities in Syria, and aspire to such attacks in Iraq to regenerate manpower.

**TACTICS:** ISIS exploited vulnerabilities in SDF detention security, including by bribing guard force personnel. ISIS continued to **exploit Turkish territory to support regional and global activity**, although counterterrorism pressure almost certainly constrained ISIS's ability to successfully conduct attacks in Türkiye.

**EXTERNAL OPERATIONS:** ISIS has historically encouraged supporters to avenge the deaths of its leaders. The DIA said that while the removal of the ISIS emir may prompt a call to action against Western countries, **ISIS's ability to conduct external attacks had not changed significantly**. The group continued to publicly call for attacks against U.S. interests in the Middle East and in the West. But ISIS did not claim responsibility for any attacks in the United States or Europe in 2022 and probably remains unable to direct attacks against the United States.

ISIS continued to **emphasize regional expansion**, especially in Afghanistan and Africa, where ISIS branches have attacked Western targets in the past and control some territory. ISIS maintained 19 publicly recognized branches worldwide and claimed responsibility for attacks in dozens of countries.

**Sources:** USCENTCOM, press release, "Death of ISIS Leader," 11/30/2022; DIA, response to DoD OIG request for information, 23.1 OIR 012, 23.1 OIR 015, 23.1 OIR 016, 23.1 OIR 017, and 23.1 OIR 018, 12/21/2022; USCENTCOM, press release, "CENTCOM—Year in Review 2022: The Fight Against ISIS," 12/29/2022.

**FINANCES:** ISIS continued to raise funds through extortion, kidnapping for ransom, targeting civilian businesses and populations, looting, and the possible operation of front companies. The group relied on **money services** businesses, including informal hawala money transfer channels, to transfer funds internationally.

ISIS supporters used **virtual currencies and online fundraising platforms** to transfer funds. Supporters sent funds to intermediaries in Türkiye who smuggled cash into Syria or sent the funds via the hawala system. In al-Hol, ISIS supporters received up to \$20,000 monthly via the hawala system.

ISIS maintains access to as much as **\$25 million in cash reserves** held in Syria and Iraq and used the funds to support its branches and networks around the world, finance extremist operations, maintain a cadre of supporters, conduct recruitment, secure the release of its members from detention facilities and displaced persons camps, and pay family members of deceased and imprisoned ISIS personnel.

However, ISIS Core's **revenue streams are diminishing** due to pressure from Coalition forces and law enforcement actions in the region. Treasury estimated that ISIS militants operating in Syria and Iraq spend more money per month than they can generate and that ISIS leaders in Iraq and Syria have increasingly emphasized the importance of fundraising to their subordinates.

**Sources:** Treasury OIG, response to DoD OIG request for information, 23.1 WOG TREAS 03, 23.1 WOG TREAS 04, 1/10/2023; Treasury, "Fact Sheet: Countering ISIS Financing" 11/18/2022.

## 6,000 to 10,000

Estimated number of ISIS fighters at large in Iraq and Syria, down from as many as 18,000 two years ago.

UN Security Council, "Fifteenth Report of the Secretary-General on the Threat Posed by ISIL (Da'esh) to International Peace and Security," S/2022/576, 7/26/2022.







A U.S. Army Soldier provides overwatch during a combined training exercise at Al-Asad Air Base, Iraq. (U.S. Army photo)

## IRAQ

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## IRAQ

In Iraq, the Coalition's Combined Joint Task Force–Operation Inherent Resolve (CJTF-OIR) operates at the request of the Iraqi government in an advise, assist, and enable role to support Iraqi Security Forces (ISF) and Kurdish Security Forces (KSF) operations to defeat ISIS.<sup>42</sup> In addition, the U.S. Government supports the development of a capable and responsive Iraqi government and a strong Iraqi Kurdistan Region (IKR); encourages inclusive economic growth; and supports vulnerable communities as they transition from stabilization to recovery.<sup>43</sup>



**U.S. Army Soldiers conduct a dismounted patrol at Al-Asad Air Base, Iraq. (U.S. Army photo)**

## SECURITY

The U.S. Government and Coalition partners pursue their security objectives in Iraq through several organizations and funding mechanisms. CJTF-OIR has two advisory groups, the Military Advisory Group (MAG) and Special Operations Advisory Group (SOAG), which provide regular advising and assistance to senior ISF and KSF leaders. CJTF-OIR coordinates information and activity with other organizations that provide ministerial-level advising to security forces in Iraq, including the Office of Security Cooperation-Iraq (OSC-I) at the U.S. Embassy in Baghdad, and NATO Mission-Iraq.<sup>44</sup> (See page 16.)

# COALITION ADVISING IN IRAQ

## MAG-KSF Advising

Coalition advisors work with leaders from the Ministry of Peshmerga Affairs at the Kurdistan Coordination Center to enhance operational-level command and control, promote coordination with the ISF, and support other ministry reform objectives. The advisors occasionally work with lower-level KSF units.

## MAG-ISF Advising

Coalition military advisors have daily contact with Ministry of Defense leaders at Joint Operations Command-Iraq (JOC-I), located at Union III in Baghdad. This advising focuses on the five areas most important for defeating ISIS: target development, air operations, logistics and sustainment, information sharing/command and control, and planning. The advisors do not have regular contact with subordinate ISF units, including the Iraq Ground Forces Command, or ISF personnel outside of Union III.

## Non-OIR Advising and Support

Office of Security Cooperation-Iraq (OSC-I) 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 are not shown in their actual location within each province.

**Sources:** CJTF-OIR, response to DoD OIG request for information, 22.2 OIR 035, 3/23/2022; Michael Knights and Alex Almeida, “Back to Basics: U.S.-Iraq Security Cooperation in the Post-Combat Era,” Washington Institute for Near East Policy, 10/26/2021.



## SOAG-CTS Advising

Coalition military advisors work with the CTS at the strategic and operational levels. The advising focuses on air-to-ground integration, ISR, site exploitation, and other areas to develop and assess CTS capabilities.

CJTF-OIR uses the Counter-ISIS Train and Equip Fund (CTEF) as the primary vehicle for providing materiel and other support to Iraqi partner forces.<sup>45</sup> Of the \$500 million CTEF appropriation for FY 2022, \$345 million was designated to support partner forces in Iraq.<sup>46</sup> During the quarter, CJTF-OIR used the CTEF to provide \$92.2 million in materiel and support to partner forces in Iraq.<sup>47</sup> (See Figure 3.)

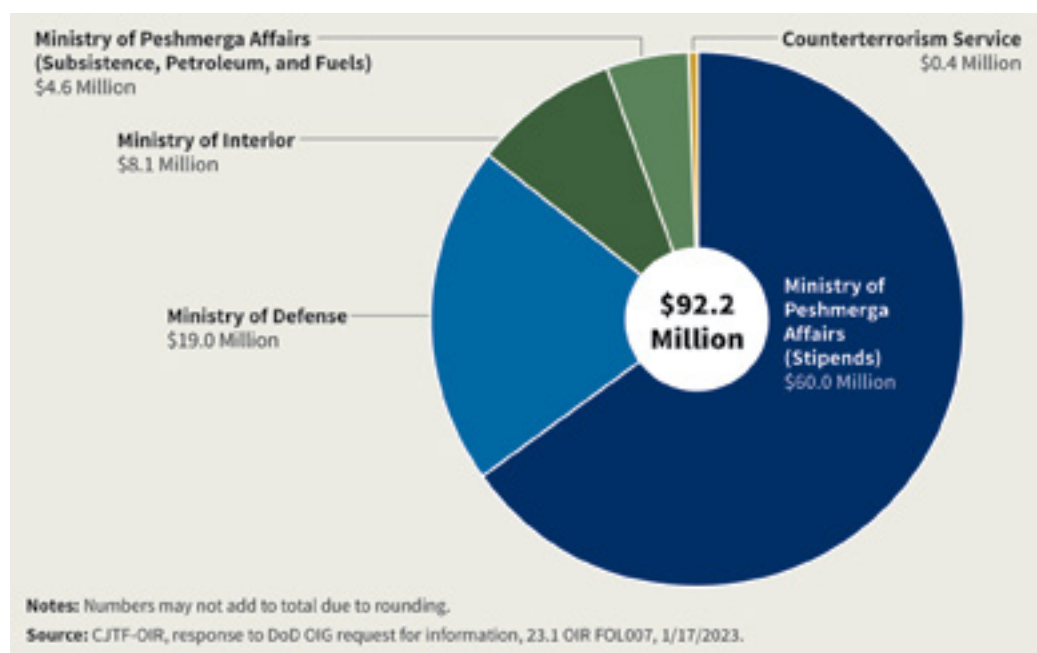
Congress approved \$1 billion for Foreign Military Financing (FMF) for Iraq (\$250 million annually) from FY 2019 through FY 2022.<sup>48</sup> Once appropriated, the funds are placed in Iraq's Trust Fund and are available to be spent on specific Foreign Military Sales cases.<sup>49</sup> As of the end of the quarter, nearly \$313 million of FY 2019 and FY 2020 funds had been spent; none of the FY 2021 or FY 2022 funds had been spent.<sup>50</sup> State explained that as a matter of policy, it recommends that the oldest available funds be used first to ensure funds are most efficiently expended.<sup>51</sup>

State said that the focus of FMF continues to be on the development of a security sector that is sustainable, efficient, effective, and transparent. State, through FMF, continues to emphasize the long-term professionalization of the ISF, strengthening its institutions, and shifting the burden of maintenance and sustainment to the Iraqis.<sup>52</sup>

During the quarter, CJTF-OIR conducted end-use monitoring on specific systems located in and around the International Zone in Baghdad. The monitoring properly accounted for all systems. CJTF-OIR, through its Iraqi partners, conducts end-use monitoring program of items and equipment provided to the ISF and KSF through CTEF. In addition, when CJTF-OIR personnel are outside the International Zone, they use these opportunities to inspect appropriate items.<sup>53</sup>

Figure 3.

### CTEF-funded Support to Iraq, October–December 2022



OSC-I said it was not aware of any reports alleging that an ISF unit receiving U.S. equipment and training had violated the Leahy law, which is an amendment to the Foreign Assistance Act of 1961 that prohibits the U.S. from furnishing certain assistance to a unit of a foreign security force if State has credible information that the unit has committed a gross violation of human rights.<sup>54</sup>

Additional information about end-use monitoring can be found in the classified appendix to this report.

## OPERATIONS AND PLANNING

CJTF-OIR said that overall, the formation of Iraq's new government has not negatively impacted the OIR mission.<sup>55</sup> Critically, the formation of the new government allowed the ISF to regain focus on counter-ISIS operations without attention diverted to civil order in Baghdad. The new government appointed new leadership in key military and national security roles. (See pages 33–35.) CJTF-OIR expressed optimism that the new leaders, including the new Joint Operations Command-Iraq (JOC-I) deputy commander, will drive important reforms.<sup>56</sup>

### ISF Counter-ISIS Operations Continue

During the quarter, the ISF launched the eighth phase of Operation Willing Resolve, a multi-force series of operations to clear ISIS from Iraq's northern provinces that involved the Iraqi Counterterrorism Service (CTS), Iraqi Army, Iraqi Air Force, Popular Mobilization Forces, and other units.<sup>57</sup> CJTF-OIR reported that the phase was first planned for September but was postponed due to religious pilgrimages and ongoing protests in Baghdad.<sup>58</sup>

CJTF-OIR reported that the operation consisted of cordon and search and clearance operations, and resulted in the arrest of 6 suspected ISIS members, the capture of 11 vehicles, and the destruction of 3 tunnels. ISF personnel also captured or destroyed improvised explosive devices (IED), mortars, rockets, and rocket-propelled grenades, among other materiel.<sup>59</sup>

CJTF-OIR reported that the Coalition provided advice during the planning and execution phases, including advice on guidelines for the operations commands.<sup>60</sup> CJTF-OIR advisors observed the ISF's ability to conduct an operation that involved multiple assets, such as intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance (ISR), fire support, ground forces, and civil affairs. During the operation, the Coalition supported the JOC-I staff's ability to track operations.<sup>61</sup> Overall, the ISF are leading successful unilateral offensive operations at the brigade level and employing combined arms operations, according to a USCENTCOM press release.<sup>62</sup>

### Coalition Continues Regular Advising of ISF Units

CJTF-OIR reported no change in the Coalition's advising relationships with the ISF during the quarter.<sup>63</sup> Coalition advisors interacted daily with JOC-I leaders of all warfighting functions, including regular contact with ISF leaders in the JOC-I Operations Center and the Joint Coordination Center, which is in charge of ISF-KSF coordination.<sup>64</sup> Coalition

The ISF launched the eighth phase of Operation Willing Resolve, a multi-force series of operations to clear ISIS from Iraq's northern provinces that involved the Iraqi Counterterrorism Service (CTS), Iraqi Army, Iraqi Air Force, Popular Mobilization Forces, and other units.

operations advisors met almost daily with Iraqi partners to track upcoming and current operations and produce daily situation reports on counter-ISIS and other operations.<sup>65</sup> Coalition advisers were invited to more planning conferences and meetings this quarter compared to the previous quarter.<sup>66</sup>

CJTF-OIR noted some ongoing challenges for the ISF’s planning and operations capability. For example, the JOC-I’s operations cell tracks daily a substantial amount of information on everything from counter-ISIS operations to progress on engineering projects, such as retaining walls and dirt berms. JOC-I leaders rely on paper maps to track the location of ISF units whose whereabouts are updated once a month.<sup>67</sup> The planning cell relies on provincial operational commands to define targets and areas of interest, determine timelines for operations, and identify the units that will execute the plan. CJTF-OIR said this delegation of authority to operational commands limits the JOC-I’s planning capability.<sup>68</sup>

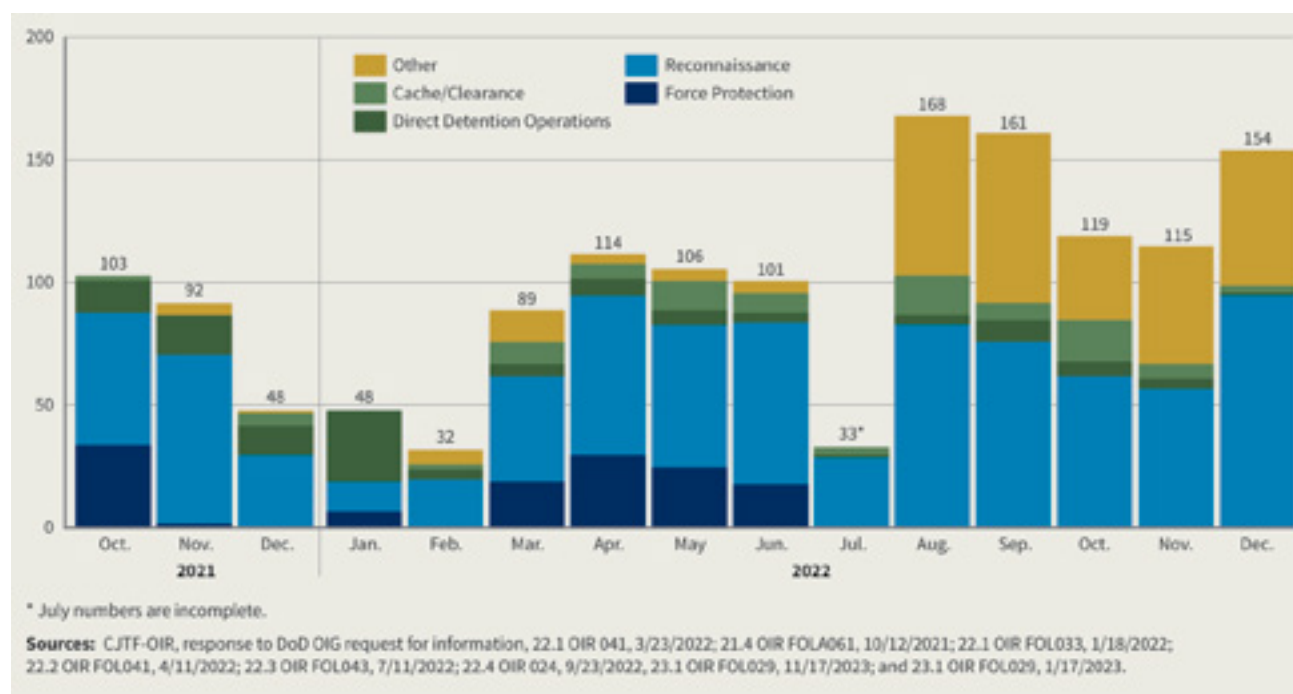
More information about ISF capability during the quarter is available in the classified appendix to this report.

### COUNTERTERRORISM SERVICE

The CTS conducts targeted counter-ISIS operations and is one of the primary areas of focus for Coalition advising. During the quarter, the CTS conducted 388 operations.<sup>69</sup> (See Figure 4.) Coalition forces conducted 30 partnered operations with the CTS during this period, resulting in 6 individuals subject to arrest warrants being detained.<sup>70</sup>

Figure 4.

CTS Operations by Type, July 2021–September 2022



CJTF-OIR reported that the CTS's ability to conduct targeted operations against ISIS changed little compared to the previous quarter. The CTS maintained a moderate proficiency in independently conducting operations against ISIS, while assistance from Coalition forces frequently enabled the CTS to be more effective.<sup>71</sup>

## Conviction Rates of Individuals Detained by the CTS Increase to Nearly 100 Percent

CJTF-OIR reported that from October through December 2022, conviction rates of individuals targeted and detained by the CTS reached nearly 100 percent. This follows months of significant improvement, from 40 to 50 percent in January 2022 to above 90 percent by September 2022. CJTF-OIR credited Coalition legal advising efforts for the improved conviction rates.<sup>72</sup>

During the quarter, Coalition legal advisors met with the CTS's Investigations Directorate and the assigned CTS judge from the High Judicial Counsel to discuss partner force needs and capacities. According to CJTF-OIR, the new CTS Judge increased scrutiny on the CTS prior to the issuance of warrants.<sup>73</sup>

Coalition legal advisors also provided oversight and assurance of the CTS's international humanitarian law training courses. CJTF-OIR said that Coalition legal advisors conducted training on proper evidence collection and handling and assisted in the forensic and digital exploitation of captured enemy materiel at the Special Forensics Investigations Laboratory. CJTF-OIR assessed that partner capacity to exploit digital evidence improved during the quarter.<sup>74</sup>

However, several critical shortcomings remain. CJTF-OIR reported that some units within the CTS continue to rely on Coalition forces to process digital and other forensic captured enemy materiel. This resulted in the CTS forensics lab receiving limited amounts of materiel, which in turn hampers the ability of the partner force to stay proficient at evidence processing and exploitation. Coalition legal advisors continue to meet with the various tactical advisors to stress the importance of building partner capacity for exploitation of digital and forensic evidence.<sup>75</sup>

Coalition legal advisors are working to make the CTS forensics lab available for other Iraqi government agencies to utilize. CJTF-OIR noted that interoperability gaps between the MoI's Federal Intelligence and Investigations Agency (FIIA) and the CTS have caused operational inefficiencies.<sup>76</sup> Specifically, an operation last quarter conducted by a CTS tactical unit using FIIA intelligence, led to friction over who would secure and exploit the captured enemy materiel.<sup>77</sup> This quarter, CJTF-OIR said the CTS received no significant support from other ISF elements.<sup>78</sup>

CJTF-OIR reported that due to a change in leadership at the FIIA as result of the new government formation, the Coalition has postponed equipment deliveries and advising engagements until the new FIIA hierarchy can be vetted, as is a standard practice. CJTF-OIR added that FIIA operations are not currently tracked due to the ongoing vetting process.<sup>79</sup>

**CJTF-OIR reported that from October through December 2022, conviction rates of individuals targeted and detained by the CTS reached nearly 100 percent.**



## CTS Gains Approval for Limited Recruitment from MoD Personnel

Following a request by the CTS leadership, Coalition advisors assembled a team this quarter to conduct a 3-week assessment of the CTS as an organization. Their assessment produced a 6-month capability development plan to enable the CTS to grow institutional capacity and provide a plan for long-term sustainability within a changing environment.<sup>80</sup> Specifically, CJTF-OIR said the assessment also provided recommendations to exploit efficiencies and ensure a sustainable force generation pipeline within available resources.<sup>81</sup>

Earlier this year, CJTF-OIR reported that the CTS was understaffed, operating at only 43 percent of its authorized personnel strength, and lacked funding for the necessary force generation effort.<sup>82</sup> Although a new Iraqi government officially formed on October 27, the 14-month budget delay continued to stall critical issues such as large-scale force generation, medical retirement initiatives, and recruiting. CJTF-OIR assessed that accounting for ongoing budget negotiations and a scheduled December recess, budget approval might occur in March 2023. CJTF-OIR stated that until the Iraqi government passes the budget, there will be continued challenges maintaining force readiness as end-strength will continue to decrease and operational capability will continue to degrade.<sup>83</sup>

However, CJTF-OIR reported that the Prime Minister and the CTS Commander have an agreement to recruit up to 50 soldiers from the Ministry of Defense (MoD) for the CTS, all of whom will be required to pass the CTS selection process. CJTF-OIR added that Coalition forces did not implement any actions to assist with ISF force generation during the quarter.<sup>84</sup>

## AIR OPERATIONS AND FIRE SUPPORT

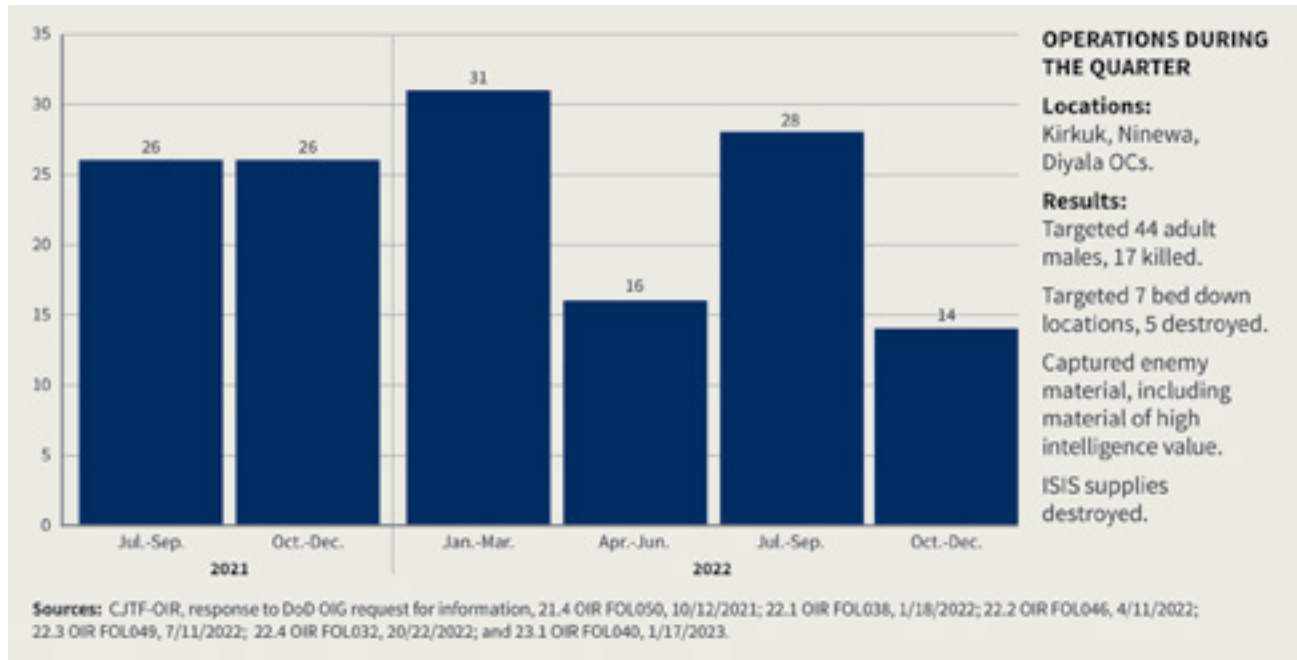
### ISF Demonstrates Ability to Conduct Airstrikes Independent of Coalition Enabling

This quarter the ISF conducted 14 airstrikes in support of counter-ISIS operations, a decrease compared to 28 the previous quarter.<sup>85</sup> (See Figure 5.) CJTF-OIR explained that the lower number of strikes during this quarter can likely be attributed to three causes: an ISF focus on other priorities as the new Iraqi government formed, a decrease in available Coalition ISR assets compared to last quarter, and lower activity by ISIS that is expected during the winter months.<sup>86</sup>

CJTF-OIR reported that Iraqi F-16s and AC-208 Cessna Caravans used precision munitions across the Diyala, Ninewa, and Kirkuk provinces, while Coalition forces provided ISR support.<sup>87</sup> In each strike, the ISF were successful in meeting their objectives and degraded ISIS's freedom of maneuver, reduced its forces, and destroyed critical supplies and hideout locations.<sup>88</sup> The Iraqi F-16s continued to be the most reliable attack platform as Iraqi AC-208 Cessnas periodically experience weapon malfunctions, which makes them the less desirable platform.<sup>89</sup> CJTF-OIR added that it assessed Iraqi F-16 pilots to be more competent and better English speakers than their colleagues operating the AC-208.<sup>90</sup>

**This quarter the ISF conducted 14 airstrikes in support of counter-ISIS operations, a decrease compared to 28 the previous quarter.**

Figure 5.

**Counter-ISIS Airstrikes by Iraqi Aircraft, July 2021-December 2022**

Of note this quarter, in early December the ISF executed an airstrike independent of Coalition support that was complemented with supporting Iraqi artillery fire.<sup>91</sup> The independent strike involved layered Iraqi ISR, F-16s, ISF artillery, and subsequent ground clearance of the ISIS bed down location.<sup>92</sup>

According to CJTF-OIR, Coalition advisors enabled nearly all of the Iraqi strikes (except the December 6 independent strike) through ISR observation, directing pilots to targets, and terminal guidance.<sup>93</sup> The advisors continued to encourage the Iraqi F-16 pilots to laser-designate their own munitions if the situation dictates, but would provide terminal guidance for ISF airstrikes when engaging difficult targets including when suspected ISIS members are obstructed partially by heavy vegetation.<sup>94</sup>

CJTF-OIR reported that in addition to airstrikes by manned aircraft this quarter, the ISF used Iraqi ISR platforms to conduct target development. For example, this quarter the ISF utilized the U.S.-produced Puma tactical unmanned aerial systems (UAS) to develop ISIS targets. CJTF-OIR said that Coalition advisors always encourage the JOC-I to employ their other UASs, such as the U.S.-produced Scan Eagle and Chinese-produced CH-4. During the quarter, inclement weather also had a negative effect on the frequency of Iraqi UAS flights.<sup>95</sup>

According to CJTF-OIR, senior Iraqi leaders are generally very receptive to advisor input when selecting targets for airstrikes. The JOC-I Strike Cell Commander puts particular emphasis on the input from the Coalition collection managers. Additionally, the JOC-I Strike Cell Commander showed interest in the Coalition legal advisor's position on the legality of

targets and has expressed his desire to have a similar legal advisor in his cell. CJTF-OIR reported that a timeline on when this may be implemented is unclear.<sup>96</sup>

CJTF-OIR reported that post-strike ground clearance operations during the quarter were more reliable than in the past. CJTF-OIR assessed that this is due to all of the airstrikes conducted during the quarter hitting targets in more easily accessible areas, as opposed to more remote areas in the Anbar desert.<sup>97</sup>

CJTF-OIR also reported that Coalition advisors do not have direct access to ISF units that could perform helicopter-borne air assaults.<sup>98</sup> In previous quarters, CJTF-OIR stated that the ISF demonstrated initiative in using Iraqi Army Aviation Command (IqAAC) helicopters to support CTS air assaults during counter-ISIS operations but that the results were “likened to shows of force” because the air insertions were on target areas abandoned by ISIS.<sup>99</sup> Although Coalition advisors have access to the JOC-I Air Cell, CJTF-OIR said that the Air Cell has not permitted the advisors to advise any ISF air assault units. CJTF-OIR stated that Coalition advisors are working to change this.<sup>100</sup>

## Government Formation Delays Impact Support for Some ISF Aircraft

USCENTCOM reported that the delayed government formation and ensuing delays in enacting a federal budget prevented the Iraqi government from committing funds to Foreign Military Sales (FMS) cases, causing breaks in service for the Iraqi Air Academy’s T-6 and King Air contracts during the quarter.<sup>101</sup> USCENTCOM said that while Iraq can support its C-130, King Air-350, and Cessna aircraft operations with minimal support from the United States, it requires continued contractor support for other key aircraft within the ISF fleet, including F-16s.<sup>102</sup>

Contractor logistics support for Iraq’s F-16s and standard equipment support services include, but are not limited to, field service representative support, logistics support for ordering parts and aircraft maintenance, training of Iraqi F-16 maintainers, and aircraft heavy maintenance assistance that is beyond the Iraqi Air Force capabilities.<sup>103</sup> Specifically, USCENTCOM explained that there are three levels of maintenance for the Iraqi Air Force’s F-16s: flight line maintenance, back shop maintenance, and depot maintenance.<sup>104</sup> The Iraqi Air Force can perform most flight line maintenance without contractor assistance, similar to the level of maintenance performed by U.S. F-16 maintainers. Iraqi maintainers can perform limited back shop maintenance, which includes some engine work, with contractor assistance and supervision.<sup>105</sup> Meanwhile, depot level maintenance is not an option in Iraq, or with most foreign operators of F-16 fighters.<sup>106</sup> USCENTCOM assessed that over the next 5 to 10 years, contractor support to the Iraq’s F-16 program is expected to decrease.<sup>107</sup>

USCENTCOM reported that U.S. and foreign national contractors are able to provide hands-on and remote maintenance support to the ISF. Since 2021, Lockheed Martin employees have been based in Erbil due to safety concerns.<sup>108</sup> USCENTCOM said that Lockheed Martin transports maintainers from Erbil to Balad daily to conduct maintenance and training for Iraq Air Force personnel. Additionally, Lockheed Martin contractors maintain the capability to provide remote guidance as needed.<sup>109</sup>

**USCENTCOM assessed that over the next 5 to 10 years, contractor support to the Iraq’s F-16 program is expected to decrease.**

USCENTCOM stated that additional contractor support at Balad Air Base provides site security, contractor life support, operations and maintenance of critical facilities and infrastructure including electronic security and communications systems; demolition; minor repair/renovation of facilities; and training for Iraqi personnel on facilities and infrastructure that support Iraq's F-16s. The facilities, infrastructure, vehicles, security, and communications systems will ultimately be transitioned to Iraq through a progressive process.<sup>110</sup>

USCENTCOM also reported that the IqAAC lacks the ability to forecast required aircraft maintenance over the long-term, which affects its ability to acquire repair parts, petroleum, oil, and lubricants before those items are needed. For example, the Iraqi EC-635 helicopter fleet was grounded during the quarter due to a backorder of tail-rotor gearbox oil. USCENTCOM said that as of December 2022, the oil was in Ali al-Salem, Kuwait awaiting shipment to the IqAAC.<sup>111</sup>

According to USCENTCOM, the IqAAC has seven different airframes that it struggles to maintain and employ against ISIS. Four of these are Russian airframes, for which the use of contractor logistics support would trigger U.S. sanctions under the Countering America's Adversaries Through Sanctions Act.<sup>112</sup>

## Ukraine War, Threat of Sanctions Constrain ISF Use of Russian-designed Helicopters

CJTF-OIR reported that due to the war in Ukraine, the IqACC's ability to access spare parts for their Russian-designed Mi-17 helicopters is constrained as most spare parts are going to support Russian military efforts in Ukraine and there are restrictions on buying Russian-made parts. CJTF-OIR said that Iraqi Air Force fixed-wing platforms have not been affected by parts availability due to the conflict, but have experienced shipping delays caused by elevated priority for Ukraine-bound shipments.<sup>113</sup>

CJTF-OIR noted that the IqAAC submitted CTEF requests to support both aircraft and airfield equipment modernization, but explained that CJTF-OIR does not have an aviation support program.<sup>114</sup> However, USCENTCOM reported that the Coalition delivered 250 guided rockets for IqAAC helicopters in November that were supplied through the CTEF.<sup>115</sup> Coalition sustainment advisors do not have visibility of ISF aviation fleet readiness reports, as the JOC-I Logistics Directorate does not consolidate status reports.<sup>116</sup>

An IqAAC Bell 407 helicopter experienced a hard landing in November. USCENTCOM reported that OSC-I, at the request of engine manufacturer Rolls-Royce, reviewed the findings of the IqAAC's crash report, which found that the device used to regulate the aircraft engine, known as a governor, failed, subsequently leading to engine failure. USCENTCOM explained that if this is confirmed, there will likely be a stand-down of the ISF's Bell 407 helicopter fleet to inspect all engines.<sup>117</sup>

**CJTF-OIR reported that due to the war in Ukraine, the IqACC's ability to access spare parts for their Russian-designed Mi-17 helicopters is constrained as most spare parts are going to support Russian military efforts in Ukraine and there are restrictions on buying Russian-made parts.**

## IqAAC Fleet Modernization

OSC-I has been working with the Iraqi MoD to convert the entire IqAAC fleet to U.S.-produced aircraft in order to simplify parts acquisition, maintenance, and training.<sup>118</sup> This quarter, USCENTCOM provided an update on multiple pending FMS cases to modernize the IqAAC helicopter fleet that have been approved by the MoD and are now with U.S. implementing agencies for action, including:

- 15 new Bell 505 training helicopters to replace the ISF's aging Bell 407 and OH-58 training fleet. (FMF)<sup>119</sup>
- 15 new Bell 407M light attack helicopters, including associated rocket and gun systems, avionics, and pilot/maintainer training, to replace the ISF's aging 407 fleet. (Iraqi funded.)<sup>120</sup>
- 4 Bell 412EPX and 16 Bell 412M medium lift helicopters to replace the Russian-made Mi-17 fleet due to inability to acquire spare parts due to the war in Ukraine. (Iraqi funded.)<sup>121</sup>
- Contracted logistics support package from Eurocopter providing comprehensive parts, materials, and field service representative support to include over-the-shoulder technical support, training, and advising. This is the first Eurocopter field service representative case for the ISF. (Iraqi funded)<sup>122</sup>
- Contractor logistics support package from Bell, to include comprehensive parts, material, and field service representative support that will replace the existing Bell support case and will cover all Bell airframes. (FMF)<sup>123</sup>

USCENTCOM said a letter requesting an estimate for the cost and availability of additional Bell 407M light attack helicopters is with the IqAAC awaiting approval.<sup>124</sup>

## ISF Increase the Use of Field Artillery and Integrate Artillery Officers into the JOC-I

CJTF-OIR reported that the ISF increased its use of field artillery during the quarter, for force protection as well as to deliberately harass ISIS safe heavens. However, Coalition advisors have not observed the ISF using artillery in a dynamic way to support ground troops during combat.<sup>125</sup> Last quarter, CJTF-OIR reported that the ISF continued to reject recommendations to incorporate artillery into ground operations, instead relying solely on airstrikes.<sup>126</sup>

In early October 2022, the JOC-I formed a Fires Cell, manned with two experienced officers from the Iraqi Army's Artillery Directorate, which CJTF-OIR said it considers a big step forward in developing the ISF's fire support capabilities. Since its formation, the cell has improved the capability of JOC-I to integrate fire support in several domains, such as situational awareness of artillery units' combat readiness, updated reports on effective artillery engagements, fires integration in operations planning, and live fire coordination. However, CJTF-OIR acknowledged that the capability level of the Fires Cell remains low due to insufficient working space layout, poor integration within the JOC-I intelligence cycle, and fragmentary information sharing.<sup>127</sup>

In terms of equipment, the ISF artillery school obtained an artillery simulator through the FMS program during the quarter. CJTF-OIR said that the addition of this simulator

demonstrated a steady consolidation of Iraq's artillery capability under the Iraqi Army's Artillery Directorate instead of requiring Coalition training. Meanwhile, CJTF-OIR assessed that further discussions with the Iraqi Army's Artillery Directorate's logistic branch should help improve management of CTEF-provided artillery ammunition, with support from the JOC-I Fires cell.<sup>128</sup>

## Coalition Advisors Begin Training Iraqi UAS Operators

Coalition advisors continued to work with the JOC-I to improve its ability to generate target packages independently. In September 2022, Coalition advisors launched a course to train Iraqi Air Liaison Officers (IALO) to support autonomous Iraqi air operations by improving communication between Iraqi pilots and the JOC-I Strike Cell during the targeting process.<sup>129</sup> Five Iraqi students graduated the program and at least one sits with Coalition strike advisors during each strike, providing them the benefit of seeing Coalition systems and processes in action.<sup>130</sup> However, since the inaugural 2-week training course completed in September, there has not been another course and Coalition advisors do not plan to hold additional IALO courses in the near future.<sup>131</sup>

Meanwhile, Coalition strike advisors instituted a new training course in November that is designed to provide Iraqi UAS operators the skills to communicate with and direct their own ISR platforms for target development and dynamic operations.<sup>132</sup> This training course, known as the Iraqi Intelligence Tactical Controller (ITC) program, began with four students and was scheduled to conclude in mid-January.<sup>133</sup>

CJTF-OIR reported that after comparative analysis of the IALO and ITC programs, Coalition advisors determined that the most effective use of current resources would be to redirect their efforts on the lower-level ITC training. CJTF-OIR explained that the goals of the IALO and ITC courses are broadly similar in that they teach skills to enable the JOC-I and Iraqi Air Force to find, track, and target ISIS fighters and hideouts. The ITC course is focused on training tactical-level UAS operators on tactics, techniques, and procedures required to support the ISF targeting process.<sup>134</sup> The IALO course is focused on training officers who manage Iraqi airspace for targeting and strike operations. Coalition advisors determined the IALO course is too broad in scope and aims for the JOC-I's current capabilities. CJTF-OIR added that in the mid-to-long term, Coalition advisors will revisit whether the IALO course is needed as the JOC-I's capabilities increase.<sup>135</sup>

CJTF-OIR also reported that Iraqi Tactical Air Controllers (ITAC) achieved initial operational capability in October. As a new and emerging capability, the ITACs were used just a few times this quarter. CJTF-OIR expects their use to increase as the ISF incorporate this new capability within the CTS.<sup>136</sup>

CJTF-OIR stated that Coalition advisors are training KSF units to develop their own ITAC capability. Kurdish counterterrorism personnel continued training this quarter with the addition of a permanent Kurdish translator at the CTS school in an effort to build interoperability.<sup>137</sup> As of December 2022, there were no aircraft allocated in support of ITAC training; the Iraqi Air Force and Army allocate resources based on availability. However, CJTF-OIR added that training events and operations utilizing ITACs are not currently part of regular reports to Coalition forces.<sup>138</sup>

**Coalition strike advisors instituted a new training course in November that is designed to provide Iraqi UAS operators the skills to communicate with and direct their own ISR platforms for target development and dynamic operations.**

**CJTF-OIR reported that the Coalition continued to mentor ISF personnel as they worked toward fully manning an information operations center in Baghdad staffed with both ISF and KSF personnel.**

## **INFORMATION OPERATIONS**

### **ISF Information Operations Monitor but Do Not Respond to ISIS Propaganda**

CJTF-OIR reported that the Coalition continued to mentor ISF personnel as they worked toward fully manning an information operations center in Baghdad staffed with both ISF and KSF personnel. The goal is to create a center capable of disseminating media messages that encourage support for the Iraqi government, cast security forces as capable defenders of the Iraqi people, and eventually counter adversarial information operations such as those coming from ISIS.<sup>139</sup>

CJTF-OIR reported that in October, ISF personnel at the Joint Information Operations Center (JIOC) used social media platforms to promote non-partisan support for the political process as negotiations on the composition of a new government were under way.<sup>140</sup> Messages encouraged Iraqis protesting the new government to remain peaceful in order to avoid the violence that erupted during similar protests in early October and August.<sup>141</sup> In November, the JIOC conducted weekly messaging campaigns to address various social issues in Iraq, such as illicit drug use.<sup>142</sup>

However, JIOC personnel have not yet countered ISIS information operations because the JIOC staff lack the ability to craft a response. Additionally, CJTF-OIR reported a potential for ISF “non-attributed” social media accounts to be recognized as coming from the Iraqi state because of what CJTF-OIR described as the “lack of seasoning” of the ISF’s social media accounts.<sup>143</sup> Instead, ISF personnel are only monitoring adversary accounts for disinformation and misinformation while they slowly build a repository of self-made products and messages meant to counter ISIS and mobilize support for the ISF.<sup>144</sup>

The JIOC also provided messaging support to the official Iraqi Security and Media Cell’s messaging channel, which maintains a Twitter account to advocate for Iraqi unity, nonviolence, and the role of the ISF and Iraqi police during popular demonstrations, CJTF-OIR said.<sup>145</sup>

CJTF-OIR reported that the JIOC became “partially mission capable” in September 2022 but continues to experience operational shortcomings, including a lack of personnel.<sup>146</sup> As of this quarter, only 30 of roughly 70 authorized civilian and military personnel had been assigned to the center. Moreover, the JIOC leadership relies heavily on the two personnel who know how to work with Adobe Photoshop programs, CJTF-OIR said.<sup>147</sup> The center needs at least 53 personnel to maintain operations 24 hours a day.<sup>148</sup>

The JIOC includes personnel from the Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG).<sup>149</sup> In addition, the KRG’s Ministry of Peshmerga Affairs (MoPA) maintains separate information operations. These include embedding information operations into small-scale tactical level military operations and successfully communicating with the Kurdish population in the IKR, CJTF-OIR said.<sup>150</sup>

Additionally, the MoPA has created what CJTF-OIR described as a “significant” social media presence that disseminates consistent messaging using Facebook and other platforms to reach different audiences.<sup>151</sup> However, CJTF-OIR reported that KSF units may struggle to scale up their information operations analysis and planning, and continue to rely on Coalition assistance to develop strategic messaging, differentiate target audiences, and conduct assessments.<sup>152</sup>

## ISF Information Operations Likely Need Years of Training

CJTF-OIR reported that to become fully operational, JIOC personnel will require substantial amounts of training on such topics as open-source internet research, developing ways to measure the effectiveness of their messaging, cyber security, and operational security. CJTF-OIR predicted that such training would likely take years and require additional JOC-I funding to develop a stable cadre of trained personnel.<sup>153</sup>

CJTF-OIR reported that as of November the JIOC has been able to release messages within a few hours of major events if it has the approval of the JOC-I Deputy Commander.<sup>154</sup> However, JIOC personnel lack the capability to counter enemy messaging quickly through a synchronized and streamlined message approval process so that the effectiveness of the enemy message is minimized.<sup>155</sup>

JIOC personnel also have not yet identified a target audience because they are still in the process of building a following of Iraqi social media users who regularly view content on ISF social media platforms.<sup>156</sup> JIOC messaging reaches a relatively small number of people, reducing its impact in the information environment. This is mainly due to the organization’s infancy, CJTF-OIR said.<sup>157</sup>

CJTF-OIR said that Coalition advisors are assessing the effectiveness of the ISF social media accounts, including by determining user engagement with the platforms, such as replies to or “likes” of various posts.<sup>158</sup> CJTF-OIR said it had observed a lack of ISF follow-up engagement with influential posters, and as a result, the JIOC leadership began requiring daily and weekly reporting of metrics such as the number of messages sent, “likes” received, and comments made or responded to as an initial means of assessing effectiveness.<sup>159</sup>

## KURDISH SECURITY FORCES

### KSF Conducted One Clearance Operation against ISIS amid Several Hundred Daily Routine Operations

CJTF-OIR reported that the KSF conducted just one offensive counter-ISIS operation during the quarter.<sup>160</sup> The KSF conducted the October 14 operation with the Zerevani, a militarized police force that operates under the Kurdish Ministry of the Interior.<sup>161</sup> Three ISIS “bed-down locations” were destroyed during the operation, CJTF-OIR said.<sup>162</sup> KSF forces that operate outside of the MoPA’s control also conducted counter-ISIS operations.<sup>163</sup>

CJTF-OIR reported that KSF forces under the MoPA conducted approximately 400 non-offensive missions per day along the Kurdish Coordination Line (KCL), including routine reconnaissance missions, ambushes, and patrols and not specifically counter-ISIS.<sup>164</sup>



Last quarter, CJTF-OIR reported that the “effectiveness of KSF clearance operations south of the KCL is limited by their inability to hold ground, which leaves the disputed areas vulnerable to [ISIS] re-occupation.”<sup>165</sup>

### **KSF Remains Dependent on Coalition Forces for Operations against ISIS**

CJTF-OIR reported that the KSF are “usually dependent” on Coalition forces to conduct operations to defeat ISIS.<sup>166</sup> For example, the KSF relied on Coalition Special Operations Forces to conduct the October 14 clearance operation. The effectiveness of KSF clearance operations remains limited by the organization’s inability to hold ground, which leaves the KCL vulnerable to ISIS reoccupation, CJTF-OIR said.<sup>167</sup>

**U.S. Army Soldiers conduct a key leader engagement with KSF personnel to work on logistical constraints and advise on future logistics operations. (U.S. Army photo)**

The MoPA also continued to exhibit shortcomings, CJTF-OIR said. These included deficits in the ministry’s ability to effectively plan and execute operations; adopt a targeting methodology to inform operations; establish a coherent command and control structure; ensure consistent fundamental battle tracking of operational activities; and sustain and equip their forces with sufficient essential classes of supplies, such as weapons, vehicles, clothing, and ammunition.<sup>168</sup>



CJTF-OIR noted that KSF artillery units in the 2nd Support Force Command in Sulaymaniyah continued to demonstrate dry-fire proficiency during one training session on counter-ISIS operations during the quarter. However, the unit requires live-fire training to increase its proficiency, which has not yet happened due to a shortage of ammunition.<sup>169</sup> In addition, while these artillery units have demonstrated basic knowledge of gun line operations, they lack the knowledge required to conduct indirect fire operations.<sup>170</sup> CJTF-OIR reported last quarter that to address these issues, Coalition MAG advisors were developing certification criteria and distributing ammunition for training.<sup>171</sup>

CJTF-OIR reported no provision of artillery-related equipment to the KSF during the quarter.<sup>172</sup>

### Joint and Coordinated Operations Stalled

CJTF-OIR reported that the ISF and KSF did not conduct joint operations or coordinated operations (simultaneous operations in the same geographic area) during the quarter.<sup>173</sup>

CJTF-OIR reported that the ISF continues to support the development of an ISF-KSF Joint Brigade. However, the plans continued to stall during the quarter due to lack of funding for the Iraqi Army unit that will make up the ISF half of the brigade.<sup>174</sup> While ISF leadership is committed to forming the joint brigade, the level of support for the effort on the part of the new Iraqi government remains uncertain. Planned transfers of U.S. funded equipment to the Joint Brigade were on hold until funding is allocated to the Joint Brigade.<sup>175</sup>

### Kurdish Ministry of Peshmerga Affairs Continues to Implement Reforms

In September, the United States renewed a memorandum of understanding with the KRG to support reform measures being undertaken by the MoPA.<sup>176</sup> The non-binding instrument has served as an organizing framework for DoD counter-ISIS support to the MoPA since 2016 and encourages continued MOPA reform. It will last for 4 years subject to the availability of funds.<sup>177</sup> During the quarter, the United States continued to pay the stipends of vetted MoPA personnel.<sup>178</sup>

Coalition advisors worked with the MoPA to bring two additional regional guard brigades under the ministry’s chain of command during the quarter, bringing the total number of regional guard brigades under MoPA control to 20.<sup>179</sup> (See Table 1.) The new brigades were staffed with former personnel from partisan units allied with the Kurdistan region’s two largest political parties.<sup>180</sup> CJTF-OIR said that the target force for the MoPA is 60,000 regular soldiers and 30,000 to 40,000 reserve soldiers.<sup>181</sup>

Table 1.  
Forces Under MoPA Command

Unit	Number of Personnel
20x Regional Guard Brigades	Up to 2,000 each
1st Support Force Command Brigade	5,475
2nd Support Force Command Brigade	5,730
1st Infantry Sinjar Battalion	405
2nd Infantry Sinjar Battalion	427
Training centers in Kirkuk, Dohuk, and Sulaimaniyah provinces	Approximately 40 each
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>48,200</b>

Sources: CJTF-OIR, response to DoD OIG request for information, 23.1 OIR 055, 12/22/2022.

CJTF-OIR noted that between October 1 and December 13, two indirect fire attacks occurred in the vicinity of Union III (the joint U.S.-Iraq base in Baghdad that is adjacent to the U.S. Embassy) but caused no Coalition damage or casualties.

## OPERATING ENVIRONMENT

### Iran and Iran-aligned Militias Continue to Attack Regional Rivals in Iraq

This quarter, like the previous quarter, there were no confirmed attacks by Iran-aligned militias on U.S. and Coalition personnel operating in Iraq. Unlike the previous quarter, Iraq-based militias did not claim any attacks against U.S. interests in the region outside of Iraq. The Defense Intelligence Agency (DIA) said it is unclear when the militias will renew attacks on U.S. forces in Iraq because the militias are focused on securing their political interests. However, these militias remain committed to removing the U.S. forces from Iraq through force if necessary.<sup>182</sup>

CJTF-OIR noted that during the quarter, two indirect fire attacks occurred in the vicinity of Union III (the joint U.S.-Iraq base in Baghdad that is adjacent to the U.S. Embassy) but caused no Coalition damage or casualties. CJTF-OIR assessed that the likely target of these attacks was not Union III and that the attacks were likely related to domestic Iraqi politics with the intent to influence Iraqi government formation.<sup>183</sup>

**Attacks in the IKR:** CJTF-OIR reported that during the quarter, there were at least two Iranian attacks using a combination of ballistic missiles and one-way attack unmanned aircraft.<sup>184</sup> Iranian officials claimed the attacks were intended to target Kurdish opposition groups based in Iraqi Kurdistan that the Iranian government alleges contributed to the unrest in Iran that followed the death in September of an Iranian-Kurdish woman in the custody of Iran’s morality police.<sup>185</sup>

The United States and international partners condemned the attacks as a violation of Iraq’s territorial integrity.<sup>186</sup> U.S. National Security Advisor Jake Sullivan said “Iran cannot deflect blame from its internal problems and the legitimate grievances of its population with attacks across its borders.”<sup>187</sup> State “strongly condemned” the attacks as “brazen violations” of Iraq’s territorial integrity, noting that they “placed civilians at risk...and jeopardized the hard-fought security and stability of Iraq.”<sup>188</sup>

In December, Iraqi government and KRG officials announced an agreement to, for the first time, deploy federal Border Guards at 26 checkpoints along the border with Iran and Türkiye in the IKR as long as the guards were Kurdish citizens and were supported by Kurdish Peshmerga forces.<sup>189</sup>

**Attacks Targeting Turkish Forces:** Iran-aligned Iraqi militias claimed two attacks on Turkish forces in Iraq this quarter. The DIA, citing press reporting, said that on October 8 and December 3, Ahrar al-Iraq, a front group affiliated with Iran-aligned militias, claimed responsibility for rocket attacks on the Turkish Zilkan base. The group has previously claimed seven rocket attacks and two unmanned aircraft attacks against Turkish forces in Iraq. The DIA assessed, based on open source analysis, that these attacks were almost certainly conducted as part of the militias’ efforts to oust the Turkish presence, which they consider to be a threat to Iraq’s sovereignty and internal stability. The DIA said it has no indications that Iran directed these attacks.<sup>190</sup>

## Diplomatic Operations Update

### **STAFFING CAP HINDERS EMBASSY SAFETY, OPERATIONS, AND MANAGEMENT**

Mission Iraq (the U.S. Embassy in Baghdad, the Baghdad Diplomatic Support Center, and the U.S. Consulate General in Erbil) continued to operate during the quarter under a staffing cap for certain U.S. direct-hire employees and third-country direct-hire staff. State said that the in-country cap constrained Mission Iraq's ability to fulfill its diplomatic mandate, maintain proper oversight of large life support and operational support contracts, and best ensure the safety of its personnel.<sup>191</sup> The embassy had to continuously coordinate all arrivals and departures and could not easily bring additional personnel into Iraq on short notice.<sup>192</sup> After the end of the quarter, State's Office of Management Strategy and Solutions completed its review of embassy staffing as part of its Overseas Presence Review.<sup>193</sup> Details of the review will be included in the next quarterly report.

### **CONSTRUCTION AND REPAIR PROJECTS FACE SLOWDOWNS**

State reported that planning activities were under way to reconstruct and significantly upgrade all compound common access control points at the U.S. Embassy in Baghdad to meet or exceed current Overseas Security Policy Board requirements. The facilities were damaged in a December 2019 attack. The cost estimate for this project is \$260 million. State said it intends to reprogram prior year funds and award a construction contract for the work, currently planned for FY 2023.<sup>194</sup>

State reported that the primary common access control point was restored to its original, pre-attack condition and functionality and reopened mid-October. This facility serves as both a diplomatic visitor and interim consular service entry point.<sup>195</sup>

At the Baghdad Diplomatic Support Center, located adjacent to Baghdad International Airport, State has identified funding for the design and construction of the hardened fuel farm.<sup>196</sup> And at the New Consulate Compound in Erbil, State said that progress remained on track with an estimated May 2024 Certificate of Occupancy date. Delays in delivery of materials at the Türkiye-Iraqi border in northern Iraq may put the project at risk of further delays.<sup>197</sup>

### **SECURITY CONCERNS REMAIN**

State reported that threats facing the U.S. Embassy in Baghdad and the Baghdad Diplomatic Support Center remained unchanged from the last quarter but had diminished significantly compared to 2020 and 2021. However, State said there are concerns that there may be threats in the future if public dissatisfaction with the new government results in violence against Iraqi institutions situated in and near the International Zone.<sup>198</sup>

State said that the ability of U.S. diplomats to visit Iraqi ministries and key government offices in the International Zone and greater Baghdad city remained unchanged for the quarter. There have been no reports or instances of embassy personnel being unable to meet with new government leadership for security reasons.<sup>199</sup>

**The new Iraqi government under Prime Minister Mohammed Shia al-Sudani includes prominent members of the Popular Mobilization Committee (PMC) and militias aligned with Iran.**

## **New Government Unlikely to Rein in Militias**

The new Iraqi government under Prime Minister Mohammed Shia al-Sudani includes prominent members of the Popular Mobilization Committee (PMC) and militias aligned with Iran. (See page 34.) Citing press reporting, the DIA assessed that the new government is unlikely to attempt to assert control over the PMC, enforce Iraqi law over members of the Popular Mobilization Forces, or direct the ISF to challenge or confront the militias. The DIA also noted that militia leaders have gained more prominence in the new government, with members of the Kata'ib Jund al-Imam and the U.S.-designated foreign terrorist organization Asa'ib Ahl al-Haq serving as cabinet-level officials including as the ministers of Higher Education, Labor, and Social Affairs.<sup>200</sup> Nevertheless, senior Iraqi leaders remained committed to the enduring defeat of ISIS. During the reporting period, U.S. and Coalition forces continued the mission to advise, assist, and enable the Iraqi-led D-ISIS campaign.<sup>201</sup>

Meanwhile, the Iraqi court system still favors the Iran-aligned Iraqi militias, their associated political parties, and the new government. The DIA, citing press reports, said that the militias are attempting to purge officials perceived as threats within Iraq's government bureaucracy including the ISF and to install officials favorable to the new government and the Iran-backed militias.<sup>202</sup>

## **POLITICS AND ECONOMICS**

The U.S. Government, through State, coordinates diplomacy and public diplomacy programs to support Iraq's stability and enable reconstruction. State said that this engagement is necessary to combat malign foreign influence, particularly from Iran. The U.S. Government also supports Iraqi efforts to ensure a more responsive government and reduce corruption; foster private sector-led economic growth and job creation; and strengthen civil society groups so that they can operate freely.<sup>203</sup>

### **GOVERNANCE**

#### **Iraq's New Government Removes High-level Security Officials, Including Some Close to the United States**

On October 13, after nearly a year of political deadlock, Iraq's parliament elected Abdul Latif Rashid as President of Iraq. President Rashid, a Kurdish British-educated engineer, then designated Mohammed Shia al-Sudani, a former Human Rights minister under former prime minister Nouri al-Maliki, to be Iraq's next Prime Minister. According to media reports, both men had the backing of the Shia Coordination Framework, a coalition of mostly Iran-aligned parties that holds about 130 of 329 parliamentary seats and emerged as the strongest bloc after Shia cleric Muqtada Sadr directed members of his party to resign their parliamentary seats in August amid a prolonged stalemate over forming the government.<sup>204</sup>

Prime Minister al-Sudani defended the presence of U.S. troops in his country and set no timetable for their withdrawal, signaling a less confrontational posture toward Washington early in his term than his Iran-aligned political allies have taken.<sup>205</sup>

On October 27, the Iraqi parliament approved Prime Minister al-Sudani’s government. (See Table 2.) According to media reports, 12 of 23 ministers that make up the cabinet belong to parties that are part of the Coordination Framework.<sup>206</sup> The remaining ministries will be led by members of Sunni and Kurdish parties, and the Babylon Movement, which is aligned with the Popular Mobilization Forces.<sup>207</sup> The new government canceled numerous high-level appointments made by the previous government and ordered a review of 170 general officer appointments, although some of the generals were ultimately retained, the DIA said, citing media reporting.<sup>208</sup>

The new cabinet maintains a system that has existed since 2003, which allots Iraq’s government ministries to the most powerful political parties. Former Prime Minister al-Maliki, a leader of the Iran-aligned Shia Coordination Framework, was a major player in the process, according to media reporting.<sup>209</sup>

Table 2.

**Key Players in Iraq’s New Cabinet**

Appointment	Affiliation
<b>SECURITY ORGANIZATIONS</b>	
<b>Defense</b>	
<b>Thabit Muhammad al-Abbasi</b>	Al-Abbasi is a Sunni Turkmen who previously served in parliament in the Sunni Azam Alliance.
<b>Ministry of Interior</b>	
<b>Abdul Amir al-Shammari</b>	Al-Shammari was nominated by Prime Minister Sudani’s al-Furatain Movement which is part of the Coordination Framework. In a “key change,” the DIA noted that Shammari appointed Major General Maher Najm, a Shia career interior ministry officer, to be the ministry’s Undersecretary for Intelligence Affairs.
<b>Deputy Commander of Joint Operations Command-Iraq</b>	
<b>Lt.-Gen. Qais al-Muhammadawi</b>	Al-Muhammadawi is a career military professional
<b>National Intelligence Service</b>	
<b>To be administered by the prime minister</b>	Prime Minister al-Sudani announced that he himself would oversee the agency.
<b>OTHER MINISTRIES</b>	
<b>Foreign Affairs</b>	
<b>Fuad Hussein</b>	Hussein, nominated by the Kurdistan Democratic Party, will be serving a second term.
<b>Finance</b>	
<b>Taif Sami</b>	Sami was nominated by the al-Furatain Movement. She previously served as Deputy Minister of Finance and director general of the Budget Department. She was awarded the U.S. Secretary of State’s International Women of Courage Award in 2022.
<b>Justice</b>	
<b>Khalid Shawani</b>	Shawani was nominated by the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan.

Appointment	Affiliation
<b>Planning</b>	
<b>Muhammad Tamim</b>	Tamim was nominated by Speaker Muhammad Halbousi's Sunni Taqaddum Party.
<b>Oil</b>	
<b>Hayyan Abdul Ghani</b>	Ghani was nominated by former Prime Minister Nouri Maliki's State of Law Coalition, which is part of the Coordination Framework.
<b>Electricity</b>	
<b>Ziad Ali Fadhil Sudani</b>	Sudani was nominated by the Islamic Virtue Party, which is part of the Coordination Framework.
<b>Government Press Office</b>	
<b>Rabea Nadir</b>	Nadir is a journalist who previously worked at news outlets affiliated with the Iran-aligned militias Kata'ib Hezbollah and Asa'ib Ahl al-Haq. Both militias have been designated as terrorist organizations by State.

**Sources:** Al-Monitor, "Iraq's New Premier Meets with Cabinet," 10/28/2022; DIA, response to DoD OIG request for information, 23.1 OIR 023, 12/21/2022; DIA, vetting comment, 1/24/2023; May Kadow and Erik Yavorsky, "Who Is Mohammed Shia al-Sudani?" Washington Institute for Near East Policy, 11/18/2022; State, website, "2022 International Women of Courage Award," undated; Iraq Security & Humanitarian Monitor, "ISHM: October 27–November 3, 2022," 11/3/2022; State, website, "Foreign Terrorist Organizations," undated.

## Early Parliamentary Elections Unlikely

According to local news reports, Prime Minister al-Sudani promised to hold new parliamentary elections "within a year" and to amend the Parliamentary Elections Law within 3 months of taking office.<sup>210</sup> In making the promise, Prime Minister al-Sudani intended to satisfy demands made by Shia cleric Moqtada al-Sadr and prominent Coordination Framework leader Ammar al-Hakim, who said Iraq's government was "missing political balance."<sup>211</sup>

Amending the electoral law may be a major challenge because parliamentarians must agree on the distribution of districts, the mechanism for counting votes, and the composition of the elections commission that oversees balloting.<sup>212</sup> Local news reports said that the Coordination Framework had accused the previous government of managing elections in a manner that favored al-Sadr's party.<sup>213</sup>

## Al-Sudani's Ambitious Agenda Faces Multiple Obstacles

State assessed that Prime Minister al-Sudani must address a range of issues to support a stable Iraq.<sup>214</sup> Iraq is one of the world's most vulnerable countries to climate change and is already experiencing many of its worst impacts. State said that Iraq needs to improve its energy infrastructure and capture flared gas. Despite being rich in energy resources, Iraq does not generate enough electricity to provide continuous power for its residents. It is facing an acute water crisis and a lack of jobs for young Iraqis, roughly 35 percent of whom are unemployed. Respect for human rights appears to be generally backsliding, including in the Iraqi Kurdistan Region. Endemic corruption remains a major problem. State maintained the onus is on the Iraqi government to enact bold policies and reforms that concretely improve lives and reinforce democratic values and good governance.<sup>215</sup>

Prime Minister al-Sudani's priorities include building effective tools to fight corruption, creating job opportunities for young Iraqis, and increasing electricity production, among a long list of other objectives.<sup>216</sup>

**Corruption:** After taking office, Prime Minister al-Sudani declared in a speech before parliament that a “pandemic of corruption” exists in Iraq that is “more deadly than the coronavirus.”<sup>217</sup> Prime Minister al-Sudani moved swiftly in November to dismiss the head of the Baghdad Investment Committee and sent the committee's files to the Commission of Integrity. He also fired the commission's director general of investigations for his failure to take action on tax cases. Media sources reported that in August 2022 five companies were alleged to have stolen \$2.5 billion from Iraq's General Commission of Taxes account at the state-owned Rafidain Bank.<sup>218</sup>

Also in November, the Iraqi National Security Agency announced that an oil-smuggling network involving high-ranking officials of the Energy Police Force in Basrah province had been dismantled, according to local media reports. The network allegedly stole 75 million liters of oil monthly by making holes in the crude oil export lines in the Zubair oil field, one of the largest in Basrah province.<sup>219</sup>

Local media reported that U.S. Ambassador Romanowski met with al-Sudani before he was sworn in to offer U.S. support for combating corruption in Iraq.<sup>220</sup>

**Electricity:** State reported that since summer 2021, Iraq has made significant progress on construction of an Iraq-Jordan electricity interconnection and on upgrading power plants in the Muthanna and Dhi Qar provinces.<sup>221</sup> The interconnection with Jordan will supply up to 1.6 gigawatts of power to Iraq by the end of 2023, while a separate interconnection with the Gulf Cooperation Council countries is expected to provide 500 megawatts of electricity by 2024.<sup>222</sup> Additionally, State reported that the Iraqi government made a 15 percent down payment required by the Export Import Bank to finance a power plant upgrade by a Florida-based energy company. State said that even with these improvements, Iraq will fall well short of its power needs.<sup>223</sup>

The KRG continued plans to raise production at the Dana Gas Khor Mor gas field in Sulaymaniyah province. However, periodic rocket attacks on the gas field by Iran-aligned militia groups, including rockets fired at the gas field on October 12, have delayed the plans.<sup>224</sup> Additionally, disagreement between the Kurds' two main political parties over the expansion of an existing gas pipeline remained an obstacle. The pipeline would power electricity plants in Erbil and Duhok provinces. Separately, the KRG continued two 150-megawatt solar projects to pursue alternate electricity projects, including a hydroelectric project in Duhok, two 150 megawatts solar projects, and gas flaring projects. On November 20, the KRG's Ministry of Electricity said it had boosted electricity production by 700 megawatts in 2022.<sup>225</sup>

**Water:** State reported that the Ministry of Environment had developed a long-term plan for a series of investments in infrastructure improvements, including water infrastructure. USAID provides support to the Ministry of Water Resources on strategic planning and water management, and is working with the Ministry and the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers to provide an assessment of water infrastructure and identify stressors on water usage and availability.<sup>226</sup>

**Prime Minister al-Sudani moved swiftly in November to dismiss the head of the Baghdad Investment Committee and sent the committee's files to the Commission of Integrity.**



Additionally, USAID assisted the KRG Ministry of Agriculture and Water Resources to develop a roadmap to improve water management in the agricultural sector. USAID has also supported smart irrigation and solar power in northern Iraq to improve the efficiency of water use.<sup>227</sup>

State reported that the World Bank is prepared to support Prime Minister al-Sudani's initiatives, including improved delivery of public services, higher employment, and mitigation of climate change impacts. The World Bank also offered Iraq technical assistance to develop a sovereign wealth fund and an investment fund designed to lower the investment risks faced by the private sector and to improve Iraq's ability to manage and repay its foreign debt obligations. According to the World Bank, these moves are essential for Iraq to move forward with infrastructure and climate change projects.<sup>228</sup>

### **Iraqi Government Continues Regional Diplomacy**

The United States encourages and supports Iraq's efforts to expand its diplomatic presence, increase its capacity to uphold its sovereignty, build relationships with its Middle East and regional neighbors, and oppose the current level of negative Iranian influence within Iraq.<sup>229</sup>

On December 20, Jordan hosted the second round of the Baghdad Conference for Cooperation and Partnership, during which Prime Minister al-Sudani said that Iraq wanted to take the lead to improve communication and dialogue within the region to develop cooperation and defuse future crises. The conference was set up to discuss current economic, security, and climate challenges. Leaders and officials from Iraq, Jordan Türkiye, Egypt, Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, the Emirates, Qatar, Oman, Bahrain, and Iran attended, as did



**U.S. Secretary of State Antony J. Blinken hosts a working breakfast with foreign ministers of the Gulf Cooperation Council Nations, Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, and Yemen. (State photo)**

French President Emanuel Macron and representatives of the United States, European Union, and the United Nations. The first round was held in Baghdad in August 2021.<sup>230</sup>

According to a news report, Prime Minister al-Sudani supports a continuation of the Iran-Saudi Arabia talks that had been hosted by Iraq since 2021, as a way to stabilize the Iran-Saudi relationship to be in the best interest of Iraq. Under former Prime Minister Mustafa al-Kadhimi, five joint meetings had been held in Baghdad. However, despite rumors, no future meeting has been scheduled.<sup>231</sup>

## IRAQI KURDISTAN REGION

### Intra-Kurdish Tensions Intensify

The historic rivalry between the IKR’s two dominant political parties, the Kurdistan Democratic Party (KDP) and the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (PUK) continued to threaten the stability of the IKR, analysts said.<sup>232</sup>

Before the formation of the Iraqi government in October, the two parties found themselves on opposite sides, with the KDP backing Shia cleric Muqtada al-Sadr and Sunni Parliamentary Speaker Mohammed al-Halbusi in pursuit of a “majority government,” and hoping to wrest the Iraqi presidency from the PUK.<sup>233</sup> After that attempt failed, a degree of “unity” between the PUK and KDP was restored, along with the customary division of positions between the two parties, with the KDP successful in preventing the former president of Iraq, Barham Salih, from retaining his position.<sup>234</sup>

While a compromise on the choice of a president allowed the government formation process to move forward, State said that “disunity” between the KDP and PUK “will make negotiations on Kurdish priority issues in Baghdad more difficult to resolve.”<sup>235</sup> State reported that the KDP and the PUK initially worked together to resolve budget disagreements and oil and gas disputes with Iraq’s federal government, though rising tensions between the two parties led to the PUK withdrawing from KRG delegations sent to Baghdad to negotiate with Prime Minister al-Sudani’s government.<sup>236</sup> Disagreements over the investigation into the early October assassination of former PUK intelligence officer Hawkar Abdullah Rasul, also known as Hawkar Jaff, added an additional layer of tension to KDP-PUK relations.<sup>237</sup>

According to State, the KRG and Iraqi government have committed to negotiating a new hydrocarbon law within the first 6 months of Prime Minister al-Sudani’s term, and the KRG sent delegations to Baghdad during the quarter to discuss the 2023 budget, including provisions applying to oil and gas revenues and a comprehensive hydrocarbon law.<sup>238</sup>

While State noted that efforts in the IKR are underway to increase the availability of electric power and diversify its sources, tension between the KDP and PUK over contracting for an expansion of existing gas pipeline infrastructure—which would bring gas directly to power plants in Erbil and Duhok—is an obstacle to progress.<sup>239</sup> One media outlet reported that Bafel Talabani thwarted the KRG’s plans to build new gas pipelines by preventing the Iraqi Kurdish KAR Group, which got the contract to build them and is known to be close to the KDP, from accessing territory in the PUK zone. The pipelines are planned to eventually carry gas to Türkiye and onward for export to Europe.<sup>240</sup>

**State reported that the KDP and the PUK initially worked together to resolve budget disagreements and oil and gas disputes with Iraq’s federal government, though rising tensions between the two parties led to the PUK withdrawing from KRG delegations sent to Baghdad to negotiate with Prime Minister Sudani’s government**

**The Iraqi government considers Turkish military actions a violation of its sovereignty, and the Iraqi Ministry of Foreign Affairs regularly summons the Turkish ambassador to register the government's protests without result.**

Just prior to the end of the 2022, the KDP and the PUK reportedly reached an agreement to replace KRG Minister of Peshmerga Affairs Shoresh Ismail with Rebaz Berkoty, the current head of the PUK bloc at the Erbil Provincial Council, as part of a broader cabinet shuffle. The replacement of Ismail with Berkoty will require approval by the Iraqi Kurdistan Parliament.<sup>241</sup>

## **Türkiye Continues to Strike the PKK in Iraq**

The Turkish government increased military operations in northern Iraq during the quarter. Turkish forces bombed areas of the Asos Mountains in Sulaymaniya province in October, launched airstrikes in November, and conducted air and ground operations in December, according to media reports.<sup>242</sup> CJTF-OIR reported that Turkish operations in Iraq had a limited impact on Kurdish operations against ISIS.<sup>243</sup>

The Turkish operations targeted Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK) fighters, which the government of Türkiye alleges have long used northern Iraq as a base to wage an insurgency against Türkiye. The United States and the European Union have designated the PKK a terrorist organization. The KRG said that at least 32 PKK militants were killed in 25 air raids during the quarter.<sup>244</sup>

Türkiye has been waging an air and ground assault against the PKK in northern Iraq and in northern Syria—where PKK militants are also present—using aircraft, drones, artillery, and ground troops.<sup>245</sup> The Iraqi government considers Turkish military actions a violation of its sovereignty, and the Iraqi Ministry of Foreign Affairs regularly summons the Turkish ambassador to register the government's protests without result.<sup>246</sup>

The United States also regularly expresses concern over Turkish military actions in Iraq. According to a media reports, State reiterated these concerns following Turkish strikes in northern Iraq in October.<sup>247</sup>

“The repeated attacks carried out by the Iranian and Turkish forces with missiles and drones on the Kurdistan region are a violation of the sovereignty of Iraq,” a statement from Iraq's foreign ministry said.<sup>248</sup> According to a press account, State said it opposed “any uncoordinated military action in Iraq that violates Iraq's sovereignty.”<sup>249</sup> State also said that they “continue to encourage Türkiye to closely coordinate and deconflict its counter-PKK efforts with the Iraqi government” but did not say whether the attacks were coordinated or not.<sup>250</sup>

## **ECONOMY**

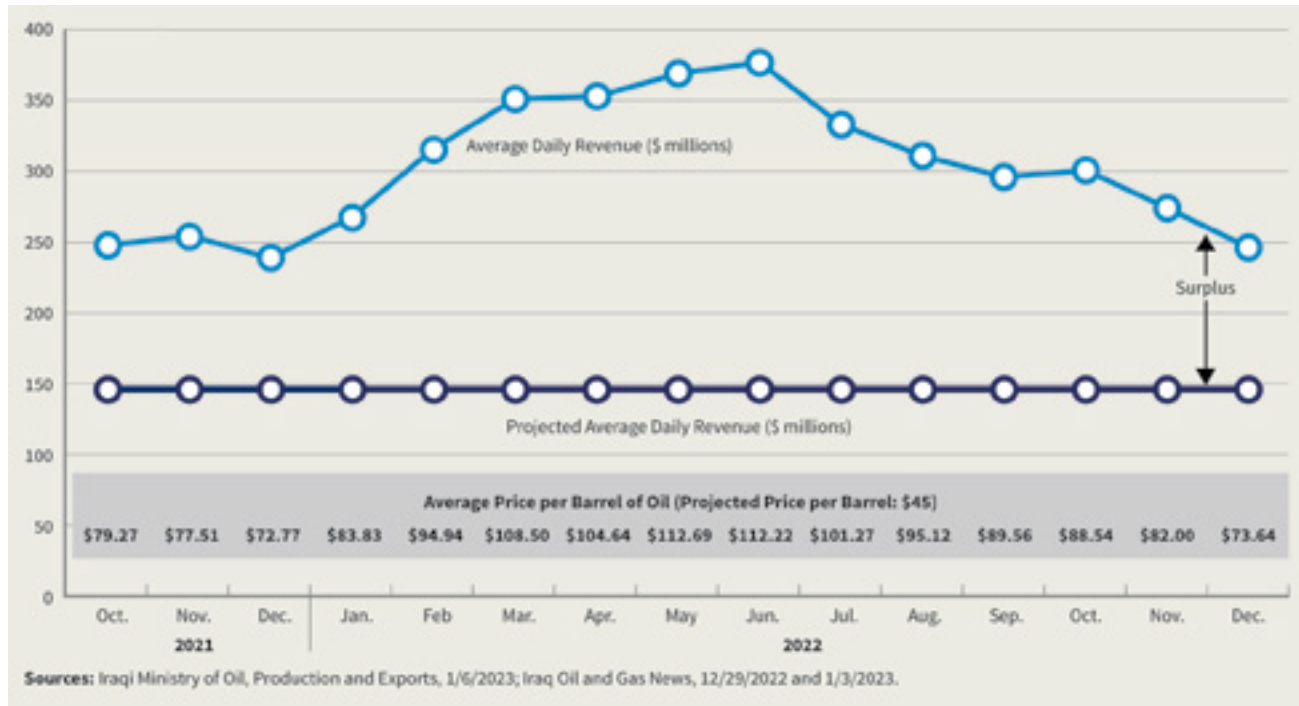
### **Oil Revenues Soar in 2022**

The United States views robust oil export revenues as a key resource in developing Iraq as an independent and prosperous partner that is able to provide for all its citizens as it continues to recover and rebuild following the defeat of ISIS, emerge from the COVID-19 pandemic, and address the threats of climate change.<sup>251</sup>

Iraq's revenue from oil exports exceeded \$115 billion during 2022, an increase of more than 50 percent over 2021, according to Iraq's oil minister. Iraq averaged 3.3 million barrels per day, or more than 1.2 billion barrels for the year. Export revenues remained steady in

Figure 6.

**Actual vs. Projected Daily Oil Revenue, in \$ Millions, October 2021–December 2022**



October and November, dropping to their lowest monthly level for 2022 in December.<sup>252</sup> (See Figure 6.)

During the COVID-19 pandemic, Iraq’s annual oil revenues have dropped significantly to \$42 billion in 2020 from \$78.5 billion in 2019. Annual oil export revenues reversed course in 2021, increasing to \$75.6 billion before increasing to more than \$115 billion in 2022.<sup>253</sup> Oil export revenues account for approximately 90 percent of the Iraqi government’s income. The spike in oil revenues has helped offset the severe drop in revenues during the pandemic years of 2020 and 2021.<sup>254</sup>

## STABILIZATION

The U.S. Government seeks a stable Iraq capable of suppressing insurgencies and violent extremist organizations at the local government and law enforcement levels. The U.S. Government funds programs that seek to accelerate the restoration of essential services in conflict-affected areas of Iraq. In addition, the U.S. Government assists ethnic and religious minority communities and supports programs that help displaced persons return with dignity, safely, and voluntarily to their places of origin or settle in other destinations of their choosing.<sup>255</sup> (See Table 3.)

USAID reported that it supported stabilization activities through 11 programs funded by USAID’s Office of Transition Initiatives and Middle East Bureau. FY 2021 funds obligated in FY 2022 for these programs totaled approximately \$76 million.<sup>256</sup>

Table 3.

**USAID-funded Stabilization Programs in Iraq During the Quarter**

Program	Activities
<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–December 2023 FY 2021: \$36,000,000</p>	<p>USAID is the largest contributor to this 29-donor, multilateral program.</p> <p>Implementer: United Nations Development Programme</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) FY 2021 funding: \$4,000,000</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>Implementer: Chemonics</p>
<p><b>Shared Future</b> Supports the durable return for IDPs from the Ninewa Plain, focusing on the historically religious and ethnic minority communities.</p> <p>June 2018–September 2023 FY 2021 funding: \$6,815,321</p>	<p>Worked with youth, and 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>Implementer: Catholic Relief Services</p>
<p><b>Iraq Response and Resilience Program</b> Supports vulnerable people in areas suffering from limited resources as a result of natural or other disasters, such as acute pollution, to ensure every Iraqi has safe access to water, electricity, health, education, free movement on sealed roads and civil/municipal services, and the opportunity to support their family financially.</p> <p>September 2019–December 2023 FY 2021 funding: \$0</p>	<p>Rehabilitated nine water treatment units in Basrah that will provide over 640,000 beneficiaries with potable water.</p> <p>Implementer: United Nations Development Programme</p>
<p><b>Safe Return</b> Focuses on reintegrating IDPs from minority communities in the Ninewa Plain and Sinjar who are survivors of severe human-rights abuses, by providing services for beneficiaries that include comprehensive medical, mental health and psycho-social services, assistance with livelihoods, and legal support, including assisting survivors of human rights abuses to pursue justice against their ISIS perpetrators.</p> <p>August 2018–September 2022 FY 2021 funding: \$0</p>	<p>Assisted IDPs from minority communities in the Ninewa Plain who are survivors of severe human rights abuses to return and reintegrate into their communities of origin.</p> <p>Implementer: Heartland Alliance</p>
<p><b>Supporting the Vulnerable Populations in Iraq</b> September 2018–September 2023 FY 2021 funding: \$10,000,000</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>Implementer: International Organization for Migration</p>

Program	Activities
<p><b>Transitional Assistance to IDPs in Erbil, Iraq</b> Assists vulnerable IDP families with immediate household needs, such as shelter and food, and ease their return home when possible. September 13, 2019–September 30, 2023 FY 2021 funding: \$600,000</p>	<p>Provided cash assistance to support the IDPs from Ninewa province in protracted displacement in Erbil and assisted beneficiaries to prepare for durable solutions for their families through targeted information and planning sessions. Implementer: Catholic Relief 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. October 1, 2020–September 30, 2024 FY 2021 funding: \$1,000,000</p>	<p>Strengthened the capacity of the Ankawa Humanitarian Committee and prepared them to fully engage with USAID on future development initiatives through strengthened capacity and commitment. Implementer: Ankawa Humanitarian Committee</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. July 1, 2021–June 30, 2024 FY 2021 Funding: \$5,000,000</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. Implementer: Sesame Workshop</p>
<p><b>Preserving the Cultural Heritage of Minority Communities in Iraq</b> Aims to contribute to communal healing, intercommunal understanding, and appreciation of the diversity of Iraq, a fundamental step toward the promotion and actualization of democracy. May 12, 2021–May 11, 2023 FY 2021 Funding: \$0</p>	<p>Partnered with local Iraqi organizations to describe and document the tangible and intangible heritage of religious and ethnic minority communities in Iraq. Created digitally documented collections as databases, built for portability, interoperability, and accessibility. Implementer: Antiquities Coalition</p>
<p><b>Iraq Community Resilience Initiative II</b> 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. FY 2021 funding: \$12,500,000</p>	<p>Supported increased positive perceptions of civic engagement Supported increased community mobilization around national causes Supporting dialogue between citizens and elected officials, as well as cultural and social spaces that foster engagement and interaction among diverse community members. Highlighted commonalities that foster unity and a shared identity across Iraq, including in the new community spaces south of Baghdad including Nasiriya, Basra Center, Islah, and al-Madina. Implementer: USAID Office of Transition Initiatives</p>

Source: State, response to State OIG request for information, 12/16/2022; USAID Middle East Bureau, response to USAID OIG request for information, 12/15/2022.



An Iraqi perfume shop owner supported by USAID assistance. (DoD photo)

## HUMANITARIAN ASSISTANCE

The UN Humanitarian Needs Overview for Iraq reported that 2.5 million Iraqis are in need of humanitarian assistance, a 39 percent decrease from the 4.1 million people in need identified in the 2021 overview. Those in need of assistance include returnees and approximately 1.2 million internally displaced persons (IDP).<sup>257</sup>

The USAID Bureau for Humanitarian Assistance (BHA) provides humanitarian assistance to vulnerable Iraqis affected by conflict, including to those displaced by violence. USAID BHA provides life-saving aid, including food assistance, water, sanitation and hygiene, shelter, protection, and emergency healthcare services.<sup>258</sup> State’s Bureau of Population, Refugees, and Migration (PRM) provides humanitarian assistance to vulnerable refugees, displaced persons, and persons at risk of statelessness. (See Tables 5 and 6.)

Table 4.

### U.S. Humanitarian Funding for the Iraq Response in FY 2022

Agency	
USAID BHA	\$82,804,279
State PRM	\$169,054,159
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>\$251,858,438</b>

**Note:** Funds committed or obligated in FY 2022. These figures reflect publicly announced funding as of September 30, 2022.

**Source:** USAID, “Iraq Complex Emergency Fact Sheet #3,” 9/30/2022.

Table 5.

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

Implementer	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 like civil documentation and legal assistance, 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; and more.</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 &amp; psychosocial support, legal assistance, shelter, prevention and response to gender-based violence and child protection issues, and more.</p>
<p><b>NGOs–Education</b> Increases access to education for displaced children.</p>	<p>Supported education services for displaced school-aged children, which is a key need for refugee, IDP, and returnee families. Provided educational kits and materials, incentivized volunteer teachers, conducted service referrals, implemented trainings for teachers, and lead targeted, evidence-based advocacy around inclusive education.</p>
<p><b>NGOs–Livelihoods and Economic Empowerments</b> Helps refugees, IDPs and returnees develop or restore income-generating and livelihoods opportunities.</p>	<p>Supported the restoration of income-generating and livelihoods opportunities, including building the capacity of the local government and institutions to provide services in the agricultural sector, trainings to develop key business knowledge and skills, cash grants for enterprise start-ups, and legal assistance services with livelihoods interventions to support beneficiaries’ access to income.</p>
<p><b>NGOs–Protection</b> Reduces risks for refugees and IDPs and promote their empowerment to exercise rights and access services.</p>	<p>Supported protection activities to reduce risk for refugees and IDPs, including gender-based violence prevention and response activities, legal assistance and awareness-raising to remove legal barriers to durable solutions for displacement-affected individuals, case management, mental health and psychosocial support services, child protection and child safeguarding training, and support for community centers and Women &amp; Girls Safe Spaces.</p>

**Source:** State, response to State OIG request for information, 12/16/2022.



Table 6.

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

Implementer	Activity Highlights
<b>Water, Sanitation, and Hygiene</b> USAID BHA-funded Implementing Partner	<p>Provided water trucking services, benefiting a total of 3,528 individuals, solid waste management services to 20,996 individuals in camps and collective centers, desludging services benefiting 14,450 individuals, continued regular operations &amp; maintenance of water, sanitation, and hygiene facilities, benefiting a total of 13,190 individuals.</p> <p>Continued hygiene promotion activities reaching a total of 20,079 individuals, and distributed 2,168 hygiene kits in Erbil and Salah al-Din, benefiting a total of 7,839 individuals.</p> <p>Worked to develop the technical packages for the three water treatment plants and one reverse osmosis restoration project in coordination with Iraqi Department of Water engineers.</p>
<b>Protection</b> USAID BHA-funded Implementing Partner	<p>Registered 29 children that had experienced child labor and child neglect.</p> <p>Raised awareness for 413 individuals, youth resilience program to 58 youths, graduated 13 female caregivers from its positive parenting program, and trained over 100 teachers as a part of capacity building in primary and secondary schools.</p> <p>Reached 26 survivors of gender-based violence, raised awareness to 699 individuals, provided structured psychosocial support services to 33 individuals and unstructured services to 85 individuals.</p> <p>Opened 164 new legal cases (and closed 22 legal cases) including family law, civil documentation, and housing, land and property cases. Provided legal counseling to 63 individuals and legal awareness sessions were provided to 232 clients in Ninewa.</p>

**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, 12/15/2022.

## Iraqi Humanitarian Coordination System Transitions

In response to decreasing humanitarian needs, the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) deactivated the UN cluster system on December 31 and is transitioning humanitarian coordination functions to the Iraq government and the KRG and, UN agencies, and NGOs.<sup>259</sup> USAID reported concerns that the Iraqi government and the KRG may be unable or unwilling to assume coordination and funding of humanitarian activities, and that gaps in both are expected.<sup>260</sup>

USAID reported that OCHA will remain operational in 2023 but in a more limited capacity.<sup>261</sup> OCHA plans to continue to lead a working group on humanitarian access through at least the first half of 2023 and is developing a transition plan that will be released in early 2023.<sup>262</sup> USAID said that as part of the transition, the Dohuk governorate provided water services and garbage collection in IDP camps.<sup>263</sup> There are plans for the Iraq government to chair or co-chair new working groups in the health and water, sanitation, and hygiene sectors.<sup>264</sup>

A USAID implementer expressed concerns that transition planning is “resting on the assumption that the government is ready and willing to take over services” and noted that budget allocations for displaced and vulnerable populations are likely to be overlooked due to the delayed government formation and budget finalization process.<sup>265</sup> Diminished funding will create a smaller pool of organizations, easing coordination, but with the likelihood of substantial gaps in needs and service provisions.<sup>266</sup> Another USAID implementer said that Iraq’s federal and regional government showed a “nominal” focus on protection issues for IDPs and no interest in providing services to respond to gender-based violence.<sup>267</sup> The implementer further noted concerns with inclusiveness, transparency, confidentiality, and that those with perceived affiliations would be excluded from services.<sup>268</sup>

## ACCESS

### Iraq Government NGO Requirements Continue to be Inconsistent

USAID reported that the Iraqi Department of Non-Governmental Organizations (DNGO) requirements were inconsistent, particularly around the issuance of access letters needed for humanitarian assistance implementers to reach areas to provide assistance.<sup>269</sup> In one case, a USAID implementer was told that the Iraqi Intelligence and National Security Agency had blocked their access letters. DNGO further informed the implementer that national staff need access letters to travel to conflict areas such as Anbar, Salah al-Din, Hawija, Sinjar, Tikrit, and Ninewa-Sahel while international staff were still required to approved have access letters when passing through any checkpoints outside of Baghdad or the IKR.<sup>270</sup> In another case, another USAID implementer reported that DNGO did not approve international staff to travel to Ninewa and Kirkuk.<sup>271</sup>

### KRG DNGO Signals Openness to Ease Restrictions on Humanitarian Assistance Implementers

State and USAID implementers continued to face administrative and regulatory challenges from the Iraqi government and KRG as they sought to administer humanitarian assistance in Iraq. State and USAID staff in the IKR have engaged with the Kurdish DNGO to advocate for NGOs and for an improved environment for civil society groups in general. While it is provisional, the KRG DNGO has signaled that it intends to reform the processes it uses to allow aid workers to operate in the IKR, collaborate with the United Nations Development Programme, and request increased U.S. engagement and assistance.<sup>272</sup>

IDP camps in the IKR are assisted through a variety of mechanisms, including multinational contributions to UN agencies and NGOs, direct and indirect assistance and coordination of assistance by KRG and federal Iraq entities, and private donations. State PRM and USAID BHA fund NGOs and international organizations that provide support for displaced persons in IDP camps and fund camp management.<sup>273</sup>

IDPs consistently listed insufficient shelter, insecurity, a lack of assurance that they will be safe in their communities, a lack of livelihoods, difficulty obtaining civil documentation, and a lack of basic services as obstacles to returning to their places of origin. Most individuals

**State and USAID implementers continued to face administrative and regulatory challenges from the Iraqi government and KRG as they sought to administer humanitarian assistance in Iraq.**

**In November 2022, the Iraqi government temporarily suspended repatriations from al-Hol camp but resumed them in January.**

affected by displacement were living on daily wages, and the restrictions on movement have significantly affected their ability to make ends meet. Furthermore, many IDPs are at high risk of secondary displacement.<sup>274</sup>

## DISPLACED PERSONS

### Iraq Government Temporarily Suspends al-Hol Camp Repatriations

In November 2022, the Iraqi government temporarily suspended repatriations from al-Hol camp but resumed them in January.<sup>275</sup> Since repatriations began in May 2021, over 1,000 families (approximately 4,300 individuals) have been repatriated to Iraq. More than 26,000 Iraqis remain in the camp.<sup>276</sup>

During the quarter, the new head of Iraq's Ministry of Migration and Displacement temporarily suspended the return of Iraqis from the al-Hol camp in Syria. The new minister previously held this position and was instrumental in the rapid closure of IDP camps in 2019 and 2020.<sup>277</sup>

State PRM continued to advocate for and fund efforts to support the ongoing process of repatriating Iraqis living in the al-Hol camp in northeastern Syria. State PRM supported humanitarian and protection assistance at the Jeddah 1 transit camp in Iraq, and funded efforts to facilitate the return of displaced persons from Jeddah 1 and their reintegration into communities of origin or relocation.<sup>278</sup>

At Jeddah 1, State PRM and USAID BHA support camp management and programming for mental health and psychosocial support. In addition, State PRM provided support to UNHCR to help the Iraqi government address returnees' civil documentation needs. Many Iraqis are missing documentation or only have expired civil documents when they arrive at Jeddah 1 from camps in Syria.<sup>279</sup>

State PRM continued to fund UN and NGO programs to support IDPs and al-Hol returnees' reintegration into their communities of origin, including the International Organization for Migration's Community Revitalization Program to facilitate voluntary returns and to provide legal assistance, reintegration grants, and social cohesion activities. The International Organization for Migration also conducts monthly post-return protection monitoring for returning households.<sup>280</sup>

USAID BHA reported that it provided limited humanitarian assistance to the temporary residents of Jeddah 1 through implementers as part of its overall approach to providing Iraq's most vulnerable IDPs with life-saving assistance.<sup>281</sup> While State PRM funding supports the entirety of the return and reintegration process—both from al-Hol to Jeddah 1 and from Jeddah 1 onward to areas of origin in Iraq—as well as assistance within Jeddah 1, USAID BHA assistance is limited to supporting services within Jeddah 1.<sup>282</sup> USAID's humanitarian assistance funding for Jeddah 1 supports camp management and support activities, such as infrastructure rehabilitation, care, and maintenance, tenting and physical site management; and protection services including mental health and psychosocial support, case management, interim care arrangements for unaccompanied and separated children, referrals for civil documentation, and parenting education, according to USAID.<sup>283</sup>





**U.S. Air Force Airmen load a U.S. Army M1A2 Abrams Main Battle Tank into a U.S. C-17A Globemaster III aircraft at Ali Al-Salem Air Base, Kuwait. (U.S. Air Force photo)**

## SYRIA

50 Security

65 Stabilization

73 Humanitarian Assistance



## SYRIA

In Syria, the U.S. Government seeks conditions where appropriate authorities in Syria are able to prevent an ISIS resurgence and eastern Syria is stable and secure.<sup>284</sup> Core U.S. Government policy priorities in Syria include maintaining the U.S. military presence to support the enduring defeat of ISIS, supporting ceasefires across the country, the expansion of humanitarian access, promoting accountability for the Assad regime's atrocities and respect for international law and human rights, and supporting a political process led by Syrians under UN Security Council Resolution (UNSCR) 2254.<sup>285</sup>

## SECURITY

To achieve its mission, Combined Joint Task Force-Operation Inherent Resolve (CJTF-OIR) works with vetted local partner forces, including the Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) in northeastern Syria and the Syrian Free Army (SFA, formerly known as the Mughawir



**U.S. Army Soldiers fire an M777 Howitzer during an operational rehearsal exercise at a mission support site in Syria. (U.S. Army photo)**

al-Thawra) in the vicinity of At Tanf Garrison.<sup>286</sup> The SDF operates in the Eastern Syria Security Area, which includes parts of Hasakah and Dayr az Zawr governorates east of the Euphrates River, as well as portions of Raqqah and Aleppo governorates.<sup>287</sup> The SFA occupies outposts and secures a 6,000 square kilometer deconfliction zone around At Tanf. The SFA provides force protection against pro-regime forces and Iranian-aligned militia group positions surrounding the deconfliction zone.<sup>288</sup>

## **OPERATING ENVIRONMENT**

Counter-ISIS operations in Syria are conducted in a complex operating environment where Coalition and partner forces operate in close proximity to other military and rival forces. (See page 52.) In the north, hostilities between Türkiye and the SDF escalated during the quarter; the Syrian regime and its aligned forces, along with its Russian and Iranian allies, conducted counter-ISIS operations, while Iranian-aligned forces also conducted attacks on Coalition, and Syrian partner positions.<sup>289</sup>

# THE OPERATING ENVIRONMENT IN SYRIA

Coalition forces in Syria operate in a complex political and military environment. Violence associated with the Syrian civil war, begun in 2011, has destabilized the country and has led to the deaths of more than half a million people. Today, the regime of President Bashar al-Assad, 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 SDF in the northeast and the SFA 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.



**Note:** This map does not depict precisely or comprehensively bases or operational locations in Syria.

**Sources:** See Endnotes on page 109.



**Türkiye does not differentiate between the SDF and the Kurdistan Workers Party (PKK), a U.S.-designated terrorist organization that has been waging a longtime insurgency against Türkiye.**

## **SDF Pauses Counter-ISIS Operations Due to Turkish Strikes**

The increased hostilities with Türkiye led the SDF to pause joint operations with Coalition advisors during the quarter.<sup>290</sup> Despite the weeks-long pause, the SDF, with the support of Coalition forces, continued to maintain pressure on ISIS and maintain security at the detention centers and displaced persons camps, CJTF-OIR said.<sup>291</sup> The U.S. Central Command (USCENTCOM) reported that partnered U.S.-SDF counter-ISIS operations resumed on December 8.<sup>292</sup>

CJTF-OIR noted that SDF counter-ISIS operational pauses are expected when escalatory actions from Türkiye occur.<sup>293</sup> SDF leaders have stated that protecting their local communities in northeastern Syria against a Turkish incursion is their highest priority.<sup>294</sup> Despite such setbacks, CJTF-OIR said the SDF values its partnership with the Coalition and the SDF remained committed to maintaining pressure on ISIS.<sup>295</sup>

CJTF-OIR stated that the operational pauses “provide ISIS more opportunities to recover and reconstitute.”<sup>296</sup> While ISIS is territorially defeated, CJTF-OIR said that the group has repeatedly demonstrated the will and the ability to rebuild.<sup>297</sup>

## **Türkiye Bombards SDF with Strikes, Increases Threats of Ground Incursion**

Türkiye does not differentiate between the SDF and the Kurdistan Workers Party (PKK), a U.S.-designated terrorist organization that has been waging a longtime insurgency against Türkiye. The Defense Intelligence Agency (DIA), citing media reporting, said that during the quarter, Türkiye amplified its threats to initiate a new ground operation into northern Syria to remove the SDF from remaining pockets along its southern border.<sup>298</sup> Türkiye reiterated demands for the SDF to withdraw from the northern cities of Tal Rifaat, Manbij and Kobane or the Turkish military would launch an operation to clear them.<sup>299</sup>

On November 20, the Turkish military launched an air and artillery operation against what it described as PKK elements in Iraq and Syria, in retaliation for a November 13 bomb attack in Istanbul that Türkiye attributed to the PKK.<sup>300</sup> The operation lasted several weeks and included hundreds of strikes on SDF and civilian targets in northeastern Syria.<sup>301</sup> Within the first few days of the operation, the Turkish Defense Minister claimed that the Turkish military struck 471 targets in Syria and Iraq, which the DIA, citing press reports, noted was a significant increase in Turkish air operations against the SDF in Syria compared to the previous quarter.<sup>302</sup>

A Turkish strike on November 22 struck close to a U.S. military position on a joint SDF/Coalition base but did not cause U.S. casualties.<sup>303</sup> The DoD said that the Turkish strikes “directly threatened the safety of U.S. personnel” and called for the “immediate de-escalation in order to maintain focus on the defeat-ISIS mission and ensure the safety and security of personnel on the ground committed to the defeat-ISIS mission.”<sup>304</sup>

On November 23, Turkish airstrikes struck SDF security forces responsible for guarding the al-Hol displaced persons camp, killing eight, and an SDF-run detention facility holding ISIS detainees in Qamishli.<sup>305</sup> CJTF-OIR, citing press reporting, said the security forces were

securing checkpoints near al-Hol and were hit with approximately five strikes.<sup>306</sup> The U.S. European Command (USEUCOM) said that the Turkish strike near the camp demonstrated the challenges faced by the SDF to both defend against Turkish actions and prevent potential ISIS escapes.<sup>307</sup>

The SDF suspended Coalition training of security forces for the al-Hol displaced persons camp for 3 weeks as a result of the Turkish strike campaign; training resumed in December.<sup>308</sup> CJTF-OIR noted that SDF leaders have stated that if the Turkish attacks continue, the SDF will no longer have the capacity to provide security at the al-Hol camp.<sup>309</sup> A war monitor reported that several humanitarian organizations suspended work at the camp due to security concerns.<sup>310</sup>

In addition, Turkish strikes hit critical civilian infrastructure and services including hospitals, grain silos and power stations.<sup>311</sup> Human Rights Watch reported that the damage caused by the attacks on critical infrastructure disrupted essential services across northeastern Syria, causing significant power and fuel shortages, school and work disruptions and civilian displacement, and forcing aid organizations to temporarily suspend some activities.<sup>312</sup> The DIA reported that damage to energy infrastructure halted northeastern Syria oil shipments, harming SDF funding.<sup>313</sup> A war monitor reported civilian deaths caused by the Turkish strikes.<sup>314</sup>

The U.S. Government repeatedly called on Türkiye to stop its military action—including a threatened ground offensive—in northern Syria and urged a halt to fighting between Türkiye and the SDF.<sup>315</sup> State reported that the U.S. Government “strongly opposes” any Turkish military action that would further destabilize Syria and risk the Global Coalition’s “hard-earned progress” against ISIS.<sup>316</sup> State said that the United States has “consistently communicated to Türkiye and to our local Syrian partners our serious concerns about the impact of escalation on our [Defeat-ISIS] goals and on civilians on both sides of the border.”<sup>317</sup>

## Russia Denies Türkiye Approval for Ground Incursion, Orchestrates Syrian-Turkish Relations Thaw

Türkiye repeatedly sought Russian or U.S. acquiescence to Türkiye launching a ground offensive into Syria but did not receive it and refrained from taking ground action.<sup>318</sup> In late December, following a series of lower-level meetings, the Defense Ministers of Türkiye and Syria met alongside their Russian counterpart in Moscow for their first such talks in more than a decade, according to media reports.<sup>319</sup> The meeting signaled a possible rapprochement between Türkiye and Syria that could shift the dynamic in northeastern Syria by strengthening the regime of Syrian President Bashar al-Assad and potentially Türkiye’s position against Syrian Kurds, according to Syria analysts and media reports.<sup>320</sup>

Following the meeting, the State spokesman said the U.S. did not support countries upgrading their relations with or helping to rehabilitate “the brutal dictator Bashar al-Assad.”<sup>321</sup> State added that the U.S. Government will not support normalizing relations or reconstruction in Syria and will not lift sanctions on Syria until there is “authentic and enduring progress toward a political solution.”<sup>322</sup>

The SDF suspended Coalition training of security forces for the al-Hol displaced persons camp for 3 weeks as a result of the Turkish strike campaign; training resumed in December.

**USEUCOM reported that while Türkiye's reinvigorated determination to launch a ground incursion into northern Syria caused the SDF to divert resources away from the ISIS fight, it did not curtail its own counter-ISIS capabilities.**

## Syrian Regime and Russian Backers Shift Forces to Reinforce Northern Syria Amid Potential Turkish Incursion

The DIA reported that in early December, following Türkiye's renewed preparations for a possible incursion, the Syrian regime deployed the 25th Special Forces Mission Division toward the Aleppo area.<sup>323</sup> The DIA said that the Russian-backed division—considered one of the regime's most capable units—deployed with engineering equipment, battle tanks, infantry fighting vehicles, howitzers, and multiple rocket launchers, marking the most significant change to the pro-regime presence in northeastern Syria.<sup>324</sup>

Additionally, the DIA said that Russia probably relocated some military equipment and personnel near Tal Rifaat to deter a Turkish offensive.<sup>325</sup> According to a media report, Russian forces set up roadblocks separating them from Turkish- and Syrian-aligned forces, who maintain presence in areas surrounding the town from the north.<sup>326</sup> A Syrian war monitor reported that Russian reinforcements also reached the outskirts of the border city of Kobane.<sup>327</sup>

CJTF-OIR reported it observed “no significant change” to the SDF relationship with Russia or the Syrian regime following the Turkish strikes.<sup>328</sup>

## Amid Tensions, Regime and Turkish Counter-ISIS Operations Continue

As the Syrian regime maneuvered to counter threats from Türkiye, both militaries continued to conduct operations against ISIS. USEUCOM reported that while Türkiye's reinvigorated determination to launch a ground incursion into northern Syria caused the SDF to divert resources away from the ISIS fight, it did not curtail Türkiye's own counter-ISIS capabilities.<sup>329</sup>

During the quarter, Turkish security forces routinely conducted raids and detained ISIS members in an effort to deter cross-border facilitation, constrain financial and logistical support, and disrupt potential threats.<sup>330</sup>

The Assad regime's strategy against ISIS did not change either, the DIA said. The regime continued to rely on less experienced military units, foreign partners, and poorly disciplined paramilitary forces to combat ISIS's presence in the Central Syrian Desert, where ISIS continued to conduct hit-and-run attacks on pro-regime positions.<sup>331</sup> These units include Iran-organized foreign paramilitary units and the Iran-supported Syrian National Defense Forces, as well as the Russia-supported Liwa al-Quds and 5th Corps.<sup>332</sup>

The DIA said that the regime's occasional effort to support a more robust counter-ISIS clearing strategy, by partially integrating formal regime units such as the Republican Guard with other pro-regime elements to conduct counter-ISIS sweeps, rarely succeeds in decreasing ISIS presence in the area.<sup>333</sup>

## Russian Deconfliction Violations Increase

While Russian forces continued to support the Syrian regime in its counter-ISIS operations, they also steadily increased their violations of deconfliction protocols during the quarter.<sup>334</sup> CJTF-OIR reported that while Russian forces generally followed the deconfliction

arrangements with the Coalition, which are aimed at preventing an inadvertent collision or clash, Russian air violations increased.<sup>335</sup> Russian ground violations in Syria were infrequent, as they were throughout FY 2022.<sup>336</sup>

CJTF-OIR said that it maintains daily contact with Russian counterparts to deconflict air and ground operations as required, and Russian forces in Syria do not significantly impede the Coalition mission to defeat ISIS.<sup>337</sup>

## Iran-aligned Militia Continue to Attack U.S. And Coalition Personnel

While Iran-aligned militias continued to pause attacks on U.S. and Coalition forces in Iraq this quarter, militia attacks continued against Coalition personnel in Syria. According to USCENTCOM and CJTF-OIR, Iran-aligned militias likely conducted at least five attacks targeting Coalition military patrol bases in Shaddadi, Green Village, and the Rumaylan Landing Zone using 107 mm artillery rockets. The attacks failed to cause casualties or damage.<sup>338</sup>

The DIA, citing press reports, said that Iran continued efforts to expand its influence among tribal militias in eastern Syria. In November, the Iranian Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps directed high level engagements in Syria between Iranian clerics and the Baqir Brigade, the largest pro-regime tribal force in eastern Syria.<sup>339</sup>

## COALITION AND SDF OPERATIONS

As in Iraq, CJTF-OIR provided critical materials through the DoD Counter-ISIS Train and Equip Fund (CTEF) to enable vetted partner forces to achieve the enduring defeat of ISIS.<sup>340</sup> CTEF is the primary fiscal authority for providing materiel and other defeat-ISIS support to vetted Syrian partner forces.<sup>341</sup> Of the \$500 million CTEF appropriation for FY 2022, \$155 million was designated to support partner forces in Syria.<sup>342</sup> During the quarter, CJTF-OIR used CTEF to provide \$11.5 million in materiel and support to the SDF.<sup>343</sup> (See Figure 7.)

CJTF-OIR reported that equipment from CTEF divested to the SDF for the fight against ISIS was sufficient in enabling the SDF to conduct effective operations and provide security against ISIS during the quarter.<sup>344</sup>

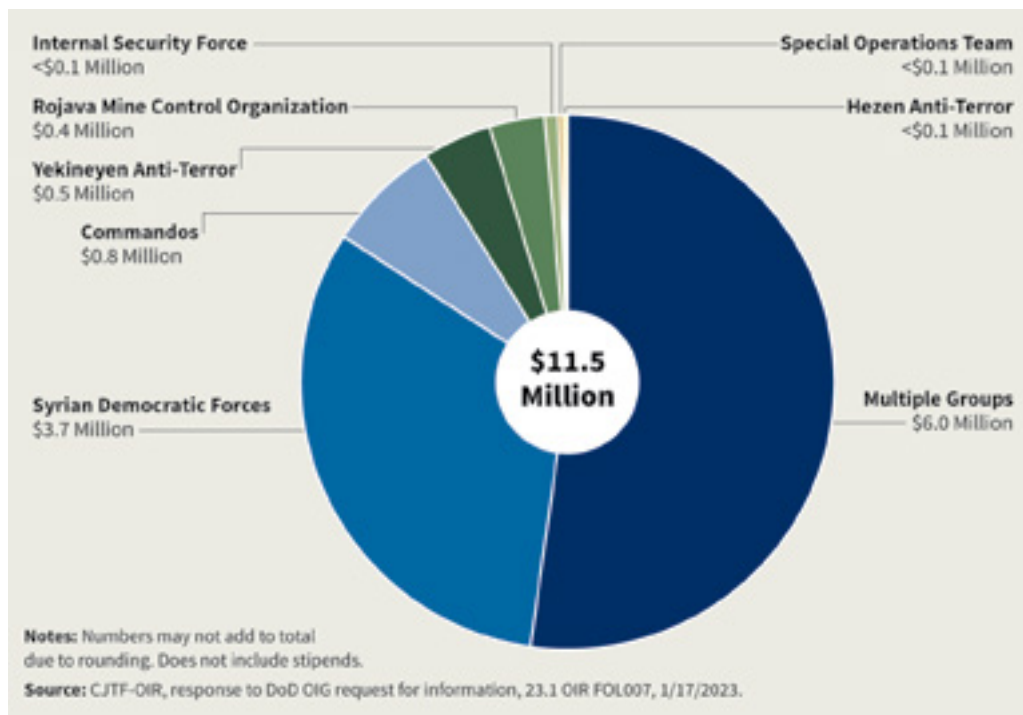
State reported that it does not conduct end-use monitoring in Syria because there is no in-country office of security cooperation or permanent diplomatic presence in the country.<sup>345</sup>

## Coalition and SDF Step Up Counter-ISIS Raids After Operational Pause

U.S. forces conducted several helicopter raids in eastern Syria during the quarter.<sup>346</sup> A raid on December 11 killed two ISIS officials—one who was involved in the group's deadly plotting and facilitation operations in eastern Syria, USCENTCOM said.<sup>347</sup> In a 48-hour period from December 19-20, Coalition forces conducted three helicopter raids in eastern Syria resulting in the detention of 6 ISIS operatives, including senior official involved in planning and facilitating ISIS attacks in Syria.<sup>348</sup> In its initial assessments, USCENTCOM reported that no civilians were killed or injured.<sup>349</sup>

While Iran-aligned militias continued to pause attacks on U.S. and Coalition forces in Iraq this quarter, militia attacks continued against Coalition personnel in Syria.

Figure 7.

**CTEF-funded Support to Syrian Partner Forces, October–December 2022**

Joint SDF-Coalition operations against ISIS also increased in December, following the resumption of SDF counter-ISIS operations on December 8.<sup>350</sup> CJTF-OIR reported that the Coalition conducted 35 operations with partner forces in Syria during the quarter, detaining 62 individuals.<sup>351</sup> Of those operations, 6 were conducted between December 8 and 16, immediately following the resumption of joint operations, and resulted in the arrest of 5 ISIS operatives who were involved in planning attacks on SDF detention facilities holding ISIS fighters and on the al-Hol camp.<sup>352</sup>

In a year-end review, USCENTCOM reported that in Syria during 2022, U.S. forces were involved in 108 partnered operations and 14 unilateral operations, resulting in the killing of 466 ISIS operatives and the detention of 215 ISIS operatives.<sup>353</sup>

### **SDF Launches Counter-ISIS Operation Following Year-End ISIS Attack in Raqqah**

On December 26, ISIS attacked an InSF complex in Raqqah; six SDF members were killed.<sup>354</sup> An SDF commander, cited in the media, said that the attack indicated “serious preparation” by ISIS cells, with two of five attackers wearing explosive belts. One was apprehended, one was arrested, and three escaped.<sup>355</sup>

On December 29, the SDF and the Internal Security Forces (InSF), with Coalition support, launched a multi-pronged counter-ISIS offensive.<sup>356</sup> The SDF said that the operation focused

on targeting ISIS hotbeds believed to be involved in recent attacks near al-Hol and areas south of Qamishli.<sup>357</sup> The SDF said that ISIS had escalated its attacks and activities in the region during the SDF operational pause, reportedly levying taxes on and threatening local residents to increase its financing and influence.<sup>358</sup>

The SDF said that on December 30, on the second day of the operation, the joint forces captured 52 suspected ISIS fighters and facilitators in a sweep of residential areas and farms.<sup>359</sup> The SDF reported that it continued the operation into January, arresting dozens more ISIS suspects and preventing ISIS cells from carrying out attacks during New Year’s celebrations.<sup>360</sup>

CJTF-OIR said that Coalition forces advised and assisted the SDF to conduct the operation successfully. CJTF-OIR said the intent of the operation was to disrupt ISIS freedom of movement and ability to conduct operations in the area, and overall, the multi-day operation “achieved success on all objectives.”<sup>361</sup>

CJTF-OIR reported that Coalition forces visited the Raqqah detention facility during the quarter to conduct an assessment and provide support to the SDF for counter-ISIS related activities.<sup>362</sup>

The SDF remained “moderately capable” of conducting most functions in both conventional and counter-terrorism operations, according to CJTF-OIR.

## SDF “Moderately Capable” but Depends on Coalition Support

The SDF remained “moderately capable” of conducting most functions in both conventional and counter-terrorism operations, according to CJTF-OIR. These functions include intelligence, logistics, mission planning, and performing operations.<sup>363</sup>

CJTF-OIR said the SDF remains dependent on Coalition forces to conduct complex counter-ISIS operations and for materiel. CJTF-OIR uses CTEF to support the SDF’s logistics and sustainment capabilities.<sup>364</sup> During the quarter, Coalition forces continued to train various Coalition-aligned forces in counterterrorism, combat actions to counter ISIS, and security and guard force training for IDP camps and detention facilities.<sup>365</sup>

CJTF-OIR reported that a key focus of Coalition forces training during the quarter was to train as many security and guard forces as possible, with an estimated two to three courses per quarter and an estimated 150 trainees per class. This training included: weapon systems and ranges, vehicle maintenance, and intelligence collection and analysis.<sup>366</sup> Coalition advisors provided “hands on” training and are currently training “train-the-trainer” units for future detention facility training.<sup>367</sup>

## SYRIA FREE ARMY OPERATIONS AND TRAINING

### New SFA Commander Improves Regional Relations

In southeastern Syria near the At Tanf Garrison, CJTF-OIR advises, assists, and enables the SFA to conduct routine training in security tactics, operations and patrols. This training includes weapons proficiency, physical fitness, maintenance, and integrated combat outpost operations.<sup>368</sup>

The SFA, formally known as the Mughawir al-Thawra, was renamed in October following the appointment of the new commander, Colonel Farid al-Qassim. The previous commander

**CJTF-OIR said that during the quarter, the SFA conducted 32 partnered training-related patrols and operations with U.S. forces, including a key leader engagement and joint training events that focused on defensive tasks.**

was relieved of duties following corruption allegations.<sup>369</sup> CJTF-OIR said that changes to the organization instituted by Colonel al-Qassim improved the SFA's relationship with the residents of the nearby Rukban Camp, the Rukban Council, and regional stakeholders.<sup>370</sup>

The SFA conducted patrols and area security in assigned areas of operation within the Deconfliction Zone around At Tanf.<sup>371</sup> CJTF-OIR said that during the quarter, the SFA conducted 32 partnered training-related patrols and operations with U.S. forces, including a key leader engagement and joint training events that focused on defensive tasks.<sup>372</sup>

In addition, CJTF-OIR said that the SFA conducted routine area security operations and patrols independent of Coalition forces.<sup>373</sup> There were no SFA enemy engagements during the quarter.<sup>374</sup>

## **Coalition Trains SFA in Planning, Tracking, Fighting and Battlefield Medicine**

SFA operational capabilities continued to improve during the quarter, CJTF-OIR said.<sup>375</sup> The force is capable of coordinating among multiple combat outposts to conduct counter-ISIS operations and defend the Deconfliction Zone.<sup>376</sup> CJTF-OIR said that the SFA has become more proficient with weapon systems, physical fitness, discipline, and overall organization of staff functions.<sup>377</sup> The SFA effectively publicized its resolve and combat readiness on its social media platforms.<sup>378</sup>

During the quarter, the Coalition provided 20 Russian-made heavy machine guns, related parts, and ammunition for these and other weapons to the SFA.<sup>379</sup>

Training for the SFA during the quarter ranged from planning and tracking to weapons proficiency.<sup>380</sup> The Coalition helped the SFA become more self-sufficient in planning and executing training at regular intervals.<sup>381</sup> Additionally, the Coalition advised the SFA on “battle tracking”, the ability to monitor all SFA activity within the Deconfliction Zone and ensure the SFA leadership have a common operating picture. The SFA operates its command post 24 hours a day, 7 days a week without any senior Coalition advisors present.<sup>382</sup>

Coalition forces are building a more robust and cyclical logistics reporting system for the SFA. Coalition advisors worked with the SFA to extend operations and training planning past the current 30-day planning horizon to 90 days, with the intent to get to annual training planning within the next 12 months.<sup>383</sup>

During the quarter, the SFA conducted “dry” mortar training, which entails learning how to emplace mortar tubes and orient them towards targets at distances up to 7.2 kilometers. Coalition forces also trained the SFA on basic rifle marksmanship, focusing on using advanced combat optical gunsights, which are optics mounted on a rifle that magnify 4 times, to engage targets up to 600 meters.<sup>384</sup>

Coalition training used both hands-on and “train the trainer” models so that SFA soldiers can continue to train themselves and future recruits.<sup>385</sup> CJTF-OIR said the SFA did not conduct artillery training during the quarter.<sup>386</sup> Additionally, the Coalition did not conduct training with the SFA to address the recently-emerged threat from unmanned aerial systems (UAS).<sup>387</sup>

## SDF DETENTION FACILITIES

### CJTF-OIR Training Guard Force at SANES Detention Facilities

The SDF continued to detain an estimated 10,000 ISIS-affiliated detainees in approximately 30 detention facilities in northeastern Syria.<sup>388</sup> The population includes 5,000 Syrians, 3,000 Iraqis, and 2,000 non-Iraqi, non-Syrian fighters—possibly the largest concentration of terrorist fighters in the world.<sup>389</sup>

CJTF-OIR reported that many detention facilities were not built to hold detainees and their long-term viability is poor compared with facilities built for that purpose.<sup>390</sup> According to State, approximately half of the ISIS fighters in detention are held in “purpose-built” facilities, and the rest are in the ad-hoc facilities, which include converted community centers or schools.<sup>391</sup>

ISIS views the populations of its fighters in detention as a means to its resurgence and has prioritized breaking its members free from detention facilities run by the SDF and the Self-Administration of North and East Syria (SANES).<sup>392</sup>

CJTF-OIR provides training and equipping to the SDF and partner forces to provide humane and secure detention of ISIS fighters.<sup>393</sup> The Coalition has also worked with the SDF to biometrically enroll the ISIS fighters in detention.<sup>394</sup> CJTF-OIR said more than 90 percent of detainees have been bio-enrolled.<sup>395</sup>

InSF training academy students demonstrate handcuffing and searching suspects during a culminating exercise with a Coalition Detention Capabilities Assessment Team, Syria. (U.S. Army Reserve photo)





**The DoD is proceeding with plans to support the construction of a purpose-built detention facility in Rumaylan that will be operated by the SDF.**

CJTF-OIR said it did not have specific information available to characterize the ability of detention facility guards to prevent communication or smuggling between ISIS detainees and external facilitators.<sup>396</sup> The DIA reported that ISIS continued to exploit vulnerabilities in SDF detention security, including by bribing guard force personnel.<sup>397</sup>

The U.S. Government maintains that the most durable solution to address the challenges of these detention centers, as well as the displaced person camps. U.S. Government policy calls for countries of origin to repatriate, rehabilitate, reintegrate, and where appropriate prosecute their nationals currently residing in northeastern Syria.<sup>398</sup>

### **Plans Ongoing for Construction of New Rumaylan Facility**

The DoD is proceeding with plans to support the construction of a purpose-built detention facility in Rumaylan that will be operated by the SDF.<sup>399</sup> The Office of the Undersecretary of Defense for Policy (OUSD(P)) said that the planned facility in Rumaylan will augment existing capacity at other purpose-built detention facilities and improve the SDF's ability to securely and humanely accommodate the approximately 10,000 detainees affiliated with ISIS in northeastern Syria.<sup>400</sup>

The construction start date, completion date, and plan to transfer ISIS detainees have not been determined. CJTF-OIR said that it will establish a basic schedule when construction contracts are signed.<sup>401</sup>

Further information about SDF detention facilities and capabilities to secure them is available in the classified appendix to this report.

## **DISPLACED PERSONS CAMPS**

### **Sharp Drop in ISIS-related Violence in al-Hol Follows SDF Security Sweep; Dangerous Conditions Persist**

ISIS-related violence and killings in al-Hol, a civilian, humanitarian camp for displaced persons, decreased significantly during the quarter, following a 24-day SDF clearance operation that ended in mid-September, and a series of U.S.-funded camp security improvements.<sup>402</sup> CJTF-OIR said that the beheadings of two Egyptian teenage girls in early November were the only known ISIS-related security incidents in the camp during the quarter.<sup>403</sup> In 2022, 32 camp residents were killed, a substantial decrease from the more than 90 killings in 2021.<sup>404</sup>

During the September clearance operation, the SDF detained hundreds of suspected ISIS operatives, captured substantial amounts of weapons, and removed tents that had been used to imprison, torture, and execute victims, diminishing the group's capabilities within the camp.<sup>405</sup>

Though overall killings decreased, ISIS networks continued operating inside al-Hol.<sup>406</sup> CJTF-OIR said that the SDF interdicted 17 ISIS smuggling attempts in the camp during the quarter.<sup>407</sup> The DIA said smuggling in the camp continued despite construction of new fencing and improved control measures.<sup>408</sup> In December, the SDF detained 10 people in

al-Hol for transferring and disbursing money in the camp without a permit from the camp administration, according to a war monitor.<sup>409</sup> The DIA noted that criminal networks are also active in the camp and not all acts of violence in al-Hol could be attributed to ISIS.<sup>410</sup>

ISIS also continued to enforce its dress codes and behavioral rules in the camp and forcefully impose its ideology by suppressing dissent and demanding acquiescence to ISIS authority, the DIA said.<sup>411</sup> ISIS exploits the poor conditions and isolated population in the camp to propagate its violent extremist ideology and spread its influence, and to target youth in the camp for recruitment and training in insurgent and terrorist tactics.<sup>412</sup> ISIS regularly recruits youth in the camp, particularly boys, and has smuggled many out to the desert to train as fighters.<sup>413</sup>

Following a visit to the camp on November 17, USCENTCOM Commander Gen. Michael “Erik” Kurilla described conditions of “squalor and misery” at al-Hol and said ISIS adherents in the camp hold women and children captive, “inculcating them with their ideologies.”<sup>414</sup>

## SDF Continues Operations, Training, to Improve Security in al-Hol

The U.S. Government continued to stress that the only practical long-term solution to the challenges in displaced persons camps is the safe and voluntary return or repatriation of camp residents to their home areas in Syria or their countries of origin, which many states remain unwilling to facilitate.<sup>415</sup> U.S. officials publicly urge countries to repatriate their nationals and either reintegrate or prosecute them.<sup>416</sup>

The SDF and affiliated internal security forces took steps to increase security at al-Hol during the quarter, though security forces did not conduct any major counter-ISIS operations or significantly change security practices.<sup>417</sup> CJTF-OIR noted that the SDF continued their security activities in the camp despite the strain of responding to Turkish threats.<sup>418</sup>

The SDF detained three Iraqis in the camp for their affiliation with ISIS in early December, and in multiple instances camp guards stopped attempts to flee the camp, according to a war monitor.<sup>419</sup>

Coalition forces continued to train and equip SDF personnel to disrupt ISIS networks within the camp.<sup>420</sup> By mid-November, Coalition forces had led six classes, and more than 660 SDF personnel had completed training to secure al-Hol.<sup>421</sup> A seventh class of 140 personnel began in November and graduated training toward the end of the quarter.<sup>422</sup> CJTF-OIR said that with the ongoing training, the SDF are “on pace to meet the security need,” in al-Hol.<sup>423</sup>

CJTF-OIR said that several CTEF-funded projects for security at al-Hol were completed this quarter or are on schedule for completion next quarter. The projects involve water tanks, fencing, and other life support systems.<sup>424</sup>

**ISIS exploits the poor conditions and isolated population in the camp to propagate its violent ideology and spread its influence, and to target youth in the camp for recruitment and training in insurgent and terrorist tactics.**

## Violence and Security Measures at al-Hol Impede Humanitarian Assistance

Security incidents and security operations at al-Hol often result in temporary program suspension or a lack of access to the camp.<sup>425</sup> USAID reported that impacts to camp residents include loss of documentation, separation of families, and lack of access to medical care.<sup>426</sup>

State said it remains concerned that security procedures undertaken by local security or camp authorities have taken “precedence over humanitarian assistance” and can “directly inhibit humanitarian organization’s abilities to deliver humanitarian aid.”<sup>427</sup> For example, in early December, camp authorities prohibited water trucks from entering the camp, disrupting water access for more than 30,000 camp residents while a new but more expensive and time-consuming process for water delivery was put in place.<sup>428</sup>

State reported that the U.S. Government supports efforts to improve security and remove violent actors, active ISIS operatives, and weapons from al-Hol because the high level of violence impedes humanitarian assistance at the camp, and “further traumatizes an already vulnerable population.”<sup>429</sup>

State said it supports efforts to train security forces and install new infrastructure in ways that take humanitarian recommendations into account to ensure that residents can still move freely inside the camp to access services, and to ensure humanitarian partners have access all areas of the camp without additional restrictions.<sup>430</sup> Short-term security solutions “are urgently needed to minimize threats to camp residents,” and longer-term solutions are required to train and equip external and internal security partners, State said.<sup>431</sup>

The international aid group Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF), which provides medical services in al-Hol, reported in November that multiple factors contributed to criminality in the camp including a sense of lawlessness, damaged social fabric, limited community structures, lack of legitimate economic opportunities, and administrative obstacles to residents returning to their homes.<sup>432</sup> The report said the residents of al-Hol are trapped between the pervasive extremist violence in the camp and increasingly oppressive counter-terrorism activities, which endanger residents and human rights.<sup>433</sup>

MSF said that counter-terrorism policies have created “prison-like” conditions and camp residents are often prevented from receiving life-saving medical treatments due to strict rules and access.<sup>434</sup> In one instance, a 7-year-old boy suffering from severe burns died on his way to the hospital after waiting 2 days for camp authorities to approve his transfer to a hospital.<sup>435</sup>

MSF said the camp lacks a formal criminal justice system or transparency around the fate of people who were detained for committing infractions in the camp.<sup>436</sup> Those detained reported experiencing or witnessing physical violence, rape, verbal abuse, and solitary confinement for long durations, and being denied access to healthcare.<sup>437</sup> Camp residents also reported regular and systematic raids throughout the camp, when security forces ‘confiscate’ jewelry, food, and money.<sup>438</sup>

Children are the most vulnerable population in the camp. The report noted that boys that look over the age of 11 were regularly detained by security forces and separated from caregivers, creating an atmosphere of fear, anxiety, and anger.<sup>439</sup>

## Government and Military Partners Coordinate to Improve Security in al-Hol

State reported that the United States coordinated with CJTF-OIR to ensure that “security clearance operations are aligned with previous lessons-learned” to minimize disruptions to essential services and other negative effects on camp residents.<sup>440</sup>

Residents accused the SDF of multiple abuses, including theft of medication, money, and jewelry; physical abuse; and destruction of food items and property. SDF commanders reportedly dealt quickly with issues when incidents were flagged during the operation.<sup>441</sup> However, many of these incidents were not reported until days or weeks after the operation was completed and NGO activities resumed. A list of allegations was shared with USCENTCOM, CJTF-OIR, and Special Operations Joint Task Force-Levant to help inform future decision-making regarding security clearance operations and prompt measures to mitigate misconduct by security forces.<sup>442</sup>

During a December 6 meeting of the Small Group of the Global Coalition to Defeat Daesh/ISIS, members discussed humanitarian and security needs in the al-Hol camp and detention centers in northeastern Syria and stressed that detention centers and displaced persons camps remain an “urgent concern in the region” and require sustainable long-term solutions.<sup>443</sup> Members also discussed repatriation, particularly support to Iraq through the UN Global Framework for the Prosecution, Rehabilitation and Reintegration of Iraqi returnees and INTERPOL screening support to improve background and security checks.<sup>444</sup>



**InSF personnel conduct an operation to clear suspected ISIS facilitators in the al-Hol displaced persons camp. (SDF-press.com photo)**

**USAID reported that escalating hostilities between Syria and Türkiye hampered the operations of USAID implementers in northeastern Syria and risked destabilizing the region.**

## STABILIZATION

U.S. Government stabilization assistance plays a critical role in the OIR mission by addressing the economic and social gaps previously exploited by ISIS and other violent extremist groups, improving local service provider capacity, and supporting civil society to advocate for citizen needs.<sup>445</sup> (See Tables 7 and 8.)

State reported that all of its stabilization programs in northeastern Syria continued this quarter. State provided assistance to “increasingly capable” local governance entities, civil society groups, and Syrian communities to support education, community security, independent media, civil society, reintegration, transitional justice, accountability, and restoration of essential services.<sup>446</sup>

As in previous quarters, the economic situation in northeastern Syria remained difficult with high commodity price fluctuations, continued devaluation of the Syrian pound, and reduced agriculture yield due to drought.<sup>447</sup> These conditions have increased the need for stabilization and humanitarian assistance funding in Syria over the past 2 years, State said.<sup>448</sup>

### Delayed Funding, Conflict Limit Stabilization Efforts

ISIS attacks did not directly affect U.S. stabilization activities during the quarter, State said.<sup>449</sup> However, ISIS attacks continued to target individuals affiliated with SANES and the SDF, posing a threat to immediate and longer-term stability in the area.<sup>450</sup>

USAID reported that escalating hostilities between Syria and Türkiye hampered the operations of USAID implementers in northeastern Syria and risked destabilizing the region.<sup>451</sup> USAID received reports of Turkish strikes that hit an oil collection center, a gas factory, hospitals, schools, at least three prominent grain silos, and military targets and outposts.<sup>452</sup> Some USAID implementers temporarily closed offices, limited staff movement, and suspended activities, including wheat seed distribution and economic technical support.<sup>453</sup> As of December 12, most USAID implementers had resumed operations.<sup>454</sup>

Many USAID stabilization projects were negatively impacted by the delay and amount of FY 2022 funding allotted for stabilization, according to USAID.<sup>455</sup> For example, the USAID Syria Livelihoods Program laid off 70 percent of its staff in order to maintain operational tempo in support of women and people with disabilities in northeastern Syria.<sup>456</sup>

### USAID Contributes to Syria Recovery Trust Fund for the First Time Since 2018

USAID obligated \$5 million for the Syria Recovery Trust Fund, a multi-donor fund administered by the German Development Bank KfW, for the first time since 2018. The funds, which were appropriated through the FY 2022 Ukraine food security supplemental, raised the total U.S. contribution to the fund to \$65 million.<sup>457</sup> The funds will be used to assist potato farmers in northwestern Syria and provide loans and technical assistance to farmers and agriculture processors in northeastern Syria, according to USAID.<sup>458</sup>

Table 7.

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

Program Goals	Activities During the Quarter
<p><b>Essential Services and Local Governance</b>                      Seeks to build local councils’ ability to provide essential services to their communities.</p>	<p>Restored essential services in liberated areas east of the Euphrates River through assistance to emergency medical teams, municipal vehicle mechanics, trash collection workers, firefighters, emergency response drivers, body exhumation teams, documentation/forensics specialists, and rubble removal teams.</p> <p>Supported Dayr az Zawr authorities to establish outreach office to monitor and respond to communities’ essential services’ needs, and to share information about the cholera outbreak.</p> <p>Provided support to build partners’ capacity through training and on-the-job mentorship that are critical for sustainability.</p>
<p><b>Civil Society</b>                      Seeks to help civil society organizations restore essential services and livelihoods in areas liberated from ISIS.</p>	<p>Worked to ease tensions between communities and displaced persons returning home, including by supporting civil society organizations to address issues such as water access.</p> <p>Supported civil society organizations to restore essential services, improve livelihoods, and enhance social cohesion in areas liberated from ISIS and in communities with members of religious minority groups.</p> <p>Strengthened the capacity of all civil society partners to serve and represent Syrians.</p>
<p><b>Education</b>                      Seeks to build the capacity of local councils, their 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 educational services, including 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 communities.</p> <p>Worked with children and their caregivers to address trauma through social reintegration programs that brought together children with and without previous exposure to ISIS to build cohesion in their home communities.</p> <p>Restored schools, provided desks and basic materials, and conducted training in computer skills, solar panel repair, carpentry, and other vocations.</p>

Program Goals	Activities During the Quarter
<p><b>Support to Independent Media</b> Seeks to promote unbiased, professional, and relevant reporting.</p>	<p>Provided capacity building and operational support to 10 independent Syrian media outlets that improved access to accurate, unbiased information and countered disinformation and violent extremist narratives.</p> <p>Supported operations and production for independent media partners producing online, television, and radio content; provided training and mentoring sessions for partner journalists and producers; and provided satellite subscriptions and mobile journalism kits to partners.</p> <p>Supported a media consumption survey to assess local media consumption and levels of trust in media. The results confirmed the extensive reach and impact of State-supported media outlets, which are regularly heard, seen, or visited by most of the population.</p> <p>Expanded news programs, gender programming and coverage of community issues.</p> <p>Supported a small grant to improve gender inclusion in partners' reporting and internal operations to improve the representation of women in the media and to empower journalists to raise awareness of women's issues and gender equity in the media.</p> <p>Trained and mentored 75 journalists and producers on writing, digital storytelling skills, data visualization, verification, content revisioning, and social media analytics.</p>
<p><b>Community Security</b> Seeks to build the capacity of internal security forces to provide security in a way that supports, and is supported by, the communities they serve.</p>	<p>Supported InSF and the governance bodies that oversee them to deliver community policing services that serves, and is supported by, the population.</p> <p>Provided a holistic approach to community security by supporting officer training, building the capacity of civilian authorities, promoting community engagement, and supporting public safety initiatives.</p> <p>Trained InSF officers on community policing skills; rehabilitated InSF stations; conducted engagements between InSF officers and local community members; and rehabilitated streetlighting in under-served areas to address a primary security concern of local communities.</p>
<p><b>Syrian Political Process</b> Seeks to strengthen the capabilities of stakeholders to participate in the Constitutional Committee and work with other UN-convened negotiations in support of UNSCR 2254.</p>	<p>Supported progress towards a political solution in Syria by building the capacity of political process stakeholders to engage in UN-convened processes for UNSCR 2254 and fostered their engagements with Syrian civil society and marginalized populations.</p> <p>Supported workshops and dialogue sessions to help bridge the gap between local community-based organizations and their local constituents by facilitating initiatives to ensure political inclusivity, knowledge sharing, and outreach.</p>

**Source:** State, response to State OIG request for information, 12/16/2022.

Table 8.

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

Program	Activities During the Quarter
<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><b>Assessments:</b> Produced assessments of the constitutional reform process, the northeastern Syria Social Contract draft and a conflict assessment.</p> <p><b>Training and Capacity Building:</b> Provided training and capacity building to 28 civil society organizations on sexual and gender-based violence, 20 women leaders on effective communication skills and outreach, and 18 civil society participants on government accountability.</p> <p><b>Community Dialogue:</b> Facilitated dialogues and roundtables on issue identification, effective communications, conflict analysis, and negotiations and mediation for local communities.</p>
<p><b>Supporting Livelihoods in Syria (wheat and livestock program)</b> Seeks to address critical quality wheat seed shortages and input gaps, and to make farmers, agro-service providers, and cooperatives more resilient to price and market shocks.</p>	<p><b>Wheat seed program:</b> Planted 1,100 metric tons of locally-sourced high-quality, certified wheat seed on 4,600 hectares of land in Amouda, Hasakah, and Dayr az Zawr.</p>
<p><b>Syria Livelihoods Project</b></p>	<p><b>Career Opportunity Matching progresses for Persons with Disabilities in Raqqa and Tabqa:</b> In partnership with a local disabled persons organization, placed 265 job seekers with disabilities in vacant positions within public and private sector organizations. Of these program participants, 34 have completed their six-month, part-paid internships and are now permanently employed at their work site.</p> <p><b>Training and application process for financial support for businesses owned by persons with disabilities in Raqqah and Tabqa:</b> Provided training to a local NGO on entrepreneurship and business plan development: 241 beneficiaries with disabilities, 181 women, and 60 men have completed the training. Provided financial support to at least 200 micro, small, and medium enterprises, all of which are owned by persons with disabilities and at least half of whom will be women. To date, 195 business plans have been submitted and are under review and pending funding, and the first five awards were made to women-owned businesses this period.</p> <p><b>Case management system for improved service delivery to persons with disabilities:</b> Worked with local authorities to support more than 18,000 persons with disabilities. Launched a case management system that registers, assesses and refers persons with disabilities, channeling individuals to support services that meet their economic, health and social assistance needs both within SANES and to external specialist service providers. To date, the program has registered 2,664 beneficiaries with disabilities and referred 113 to requested service providers.</p> <p><b>Strategic planning for Persons with Disabilities Office in Raqqah and Special Needs Office in Tabqa:</b> Supported the offices to better advocate for the inclusion of persons with disabilities into livelihoods services. Provided more than 3 months of coaching and support from in-house capacity building technical staff to finalize the first drafts of these plans.</p> <p><b>Career guidance for job seekers with disabilities:</b> Delivered employment readiness sessions and career guidance to 1,988 persons with disabilities through a local disabled persons organization. The beneficiaries also received financial support for their businesses or referrals to other specialist service providers.</p>



Program	Activities During the Quarter
<b>Economic Management for Stability in Northeast Syria</b>	<p><b>Private sector engagement:</b> Continued to provide technical assistance to over 90 enterprises with 1,200 sustainable job opportunities created. Relunched and expanded operations of weaving and spinning and garment factories.</p> <p><b>Agricultural markets and food security:</b> Conducted site visits and engaged in extensive stakeholder consultations to update the program’s approach towards agricultural markets development and enhancing food security in the region.</p> <p><b>New climate-smart agriculture technology:</b> Began a pilot program to train and equip agro-services providers in Raqqah to deliver laser leveling services to farmers in early December. Laser leveling is a low-cost precision agriculture technology that delivers climate-smart benefits by grading land to be completely flat. This reduces water use by 20-50% in flood irrigated fields, increases yields, and reduces susceptibility to crop disease. Laser levelers are not used in northeast Syria, so this pilot represents the first-ever introduction to the region.</p>
<b>Essential Services, Good Governance, and Economic Recovery</b>	<p><b>COVID-19 vaccination awareness:</b> Trained and equipped health education offices to improve their public-facing communication about COVID-19 vaccine safety and conduct an educational campaign to combat misinformation and disinformation. The interventions will also improve coordination among the regional health committees and other health actors. <i>Awarded in November 2022 with an implementation period of 6 months.</i></p> <p><b>Rehabilitation of agricultural complexes in Dayr az-Zawr:</b> Rehabilitated four agricultural complexes and their associated irrigation canal networks. The program will provide support to connect the complexes to the electrical grid, provide backup generators, replace the irrigation pumps with all appropriate electrical and mechanical works, and clean and patch the irrigation canals that distribute water from the agricultural complexes to the nearby farms. These activities will help local farmers by increasing the availability of irrigation water and reducing the cost of irrigation. The farmers are expected to use the cost savings from the irrigation to reinvest in their farms and livelihoods. <i>Awarded in December 2022 with an implementation period of approximately 6 months.</i></p> <p><b>Enhancing provision of water in Izbeh and Moazilieh:</b> Worked to rehabilitate the Tabiah Water Station and the distribution pipeline that supplies drinking water to the residents and IDPs in the region. <i>Awarded in September 2022 with expected completion in February 2023.</i></p> <p><b>Enhancing provision of electricity in Izbeh and Moazilieh:</b> <i>Worked to rehabilitate the electrical network and transformation centers in Izbeh and Moazilieh. This intervention will enhance electricity services in these communities and improve the quality of life for residents and IDPs. Awarded in December 2022 with an implementation of 3 months.</i></p> <p><b>Strengthening the role of the Social Affairs and Labor Offices in the Northern and Western Dayr az-Zawr:</b> Facilitated stakeholder engagement activities and coordination meetings to discuss the water and electricity service provision interventions, along with other IDP needs. <i>Two grants awarded in September 2022 with an implementation period of approximately 6 months.</i></p>

Source: USAID Middle East Bureau, response to USAID OIG request for information, 12/15/2022.

## POLITICAL PROCESS

### UNSCR 2254 Stalled, No Future Meeting Date

This quarter there was no progress towards the objectives of UNSCR 2254, the UN-facilitated process intended to guide a political transition in Syria. The process has remained stalled for 6 months.<sup>459</sup> The ninth round of the Constitutional Committee in Geneva was canceled after the regime withdrew its participation following Russian pressure.<sup>460</sup>

In a November briefing to the UN Security Council, UN Special Envoy for Syria Geir Pedersen said he was concerned by the lack of engagement because the Constitutional Committee is the “only process in which Syrians nominated by the government...the opposition and from civil society” meet to discuss their common future.<sup>461</sup> Mr. Pedersen cautioned that the longer the process “lies dormant, the harder it will be to resume,” and that the “absence of a credible political process can only promote further conflict and instability.”<sup>462</sup>

In a December briefing to the Security Council, Mr. Pedersen reported that Syrians faced an “ever-deepening humanitarian and economic crisis” and that the “needs of Syrians are rising just as resources are falling.”<sup>463</sup> State said the Assad regime is the main obstacle to a political solution to the conflict and that it “should empower its delegates to negotiate in good faith for the Syrian people.”<sup>464</sup> A Syrian-led political solution that represents the will of all Syrians as outlined in UNSCR 2254 remains the only viable solution to the conflict, State said.<sup>465</sup> The United States continues to support the UNSCR 2554 process through State-managed programming that provides technical expertise and capacity building for select Constitutional Committee members.<sup>466</sup>

## REPATRIATION AND REINTEGRATION

### U.S. Government Humanitarian Assistance Funds Essential Services in Displaced Persons Camps

U.S. Government-funded essential services at the al-Hol and Roj camps during the quarter included maintenance of physical infrastructure, distribution of assistance, and overall coordination of humanitarian assistance and liaison with the camp administration.<sup>467</sup> The U.S. Government reached tens of thousands of camp residents through the provision of food, water, shelter, protection, winterization supplies, health, education, and sanitation assistance.<sup>468</sup>

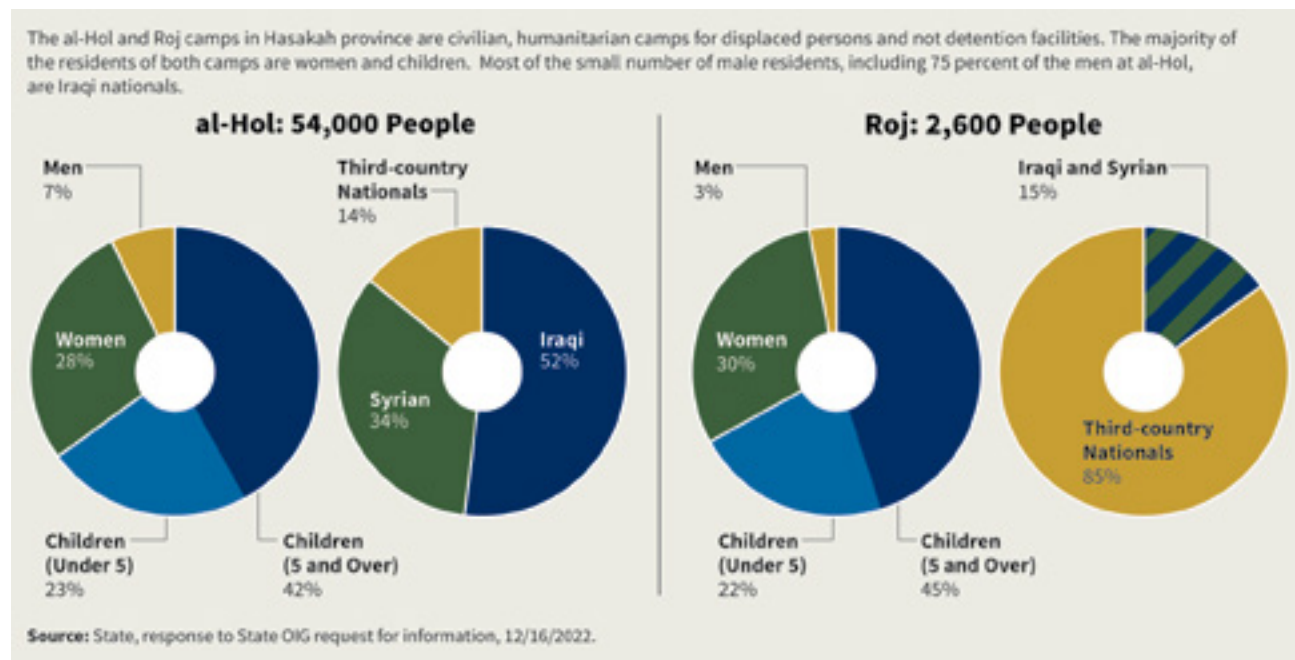
State reported that education and psychosocial assistance were the most pressing needs for children residing at displaced persons camps. During the quarter, education programs funded by the U.S. Government continued to provide psychosocial support, remedial literacy and numeracy courses, and self-learning program classes to children in formal schools and informal displaced persons camps, particularly al-Hol and Roj.<sup>469</sup>

### Syrian Reintegration Remained Slow

During the quarter, one group of 64 Syrians departed the camp for their areas of origin in northeastern Syria, State reported. In addition, 128 third-country nationals were repatriated to Germany, France, the United Kingdom, Russia, Australia, Canada, and Netherlands.<sup>470</sup> The Iraqi government temporarily suspended repatriations of Iraqis in November.<sup>471</sup>

Figure 8.

### Demographics of the al-Hol and Roj Displaced Persons Camps



The voluntary, safe, and dignified repatriation, return, and reintegration of displaced persons, camp residents, and those residing in informal settlements and centers remains the “most important solution to alleviate humanitarian concerns” in northeastern Syria, State said.<sup>472</sup> Successful reintegration remains a “critical element to facilitate durable solutions” for displaced persons.<sup>473</sup>

State said it continued to advocate for and facilitate repatriations from northeastern Syria this quarter. Host countries, including Iraq, “do not have uniform views on repatriations” and State said it works on a “case-by-case basis to assist countries in repatriating their nationals.”<sup>474</sup> More information on repatriations is available in the classified appendix to this report.

## HUMAN RIGHTS

### Three Syrian Military Officials Designated for Gross Violations of Human Rights

On October 14, Secretary of State Antony J. Blinken announced that State had designated three Syrian regime military officials pursuant to 70331(c) of the Department of State, Foreign Operations, and Related Programs Appropriation Act, 2022 for their involvement in chemical warfare against the Syrian people, specifically the August 2013 sarin nerve gas rocket attack launched by the Syrian Artillery and Missile Directorate of the Syrian Armed Forces against a Damascus suburb, Ghouta.<sup>475</sup> The attack killed at least 1,400 people, many of them children.<sup>476</sup>

According to State, Brigadier General Adnan Aboud Hilweh, Major General Ghassan Ahmed Ghannam, and Major General Jawdat Saleebi Mawas were involved in “gross violations of human rights, namely the flagrant denial of right to life of at least 1,400 people in Ghouta. As a result, the officials and their immediate families are ineligible to enter the United States.”<sup>477</sup>

## Turkish Officials Reportedly Coerced the Involuntary Returns of Syrians

This quarter, State said it “encountered” several reports of Turkish officials coercing Syrians who had temporary protected status in Türkiye to return to Syria. These individuals were detained for disturbing the public order. State reported that officials took the Syrians to removal centers and used “physical force or terrible conditions to convince them to sign” repatriation forms.<sup>478</sup> State has worked with the UN High Commissioner on Refugees to seek readmission of those who returned to Syria “voluntarily.”<sup>479</sup>

Although social acceptance of Syrian refugees in Türkiye is decreasing, “most Syrian refugees probably still prefer to remain in Türkiye and will not voluntarily return to Syria,” according to State. Refugees who return to Syria continue to face arbitrary detention, forced conscription, torture, sexual and gender-based violence, kidnapping, forced disappearance, and extrajudicial killing.<sup>480</sup> If increasing numbers of Syrians in Türkiye face coerced repatriations, more Syrians may seek refugee status in Europe. Large numbers of repatriations to northwestern Syria—where an estimated 80 percent of the population relies on humanitarian assistance such as food, clean water, and medicine—could strain scarce resources.<sup>481</sup>

State said that it was “highly unlikely” that anyone with ISIS affiliations would have been granted protected status within Türkiye, and that it does not assess these reported coerced repatriations would affect the D-ISIS mission or the SDF.<sup>482</sup>

## TSO Abuse and Harassment Continued

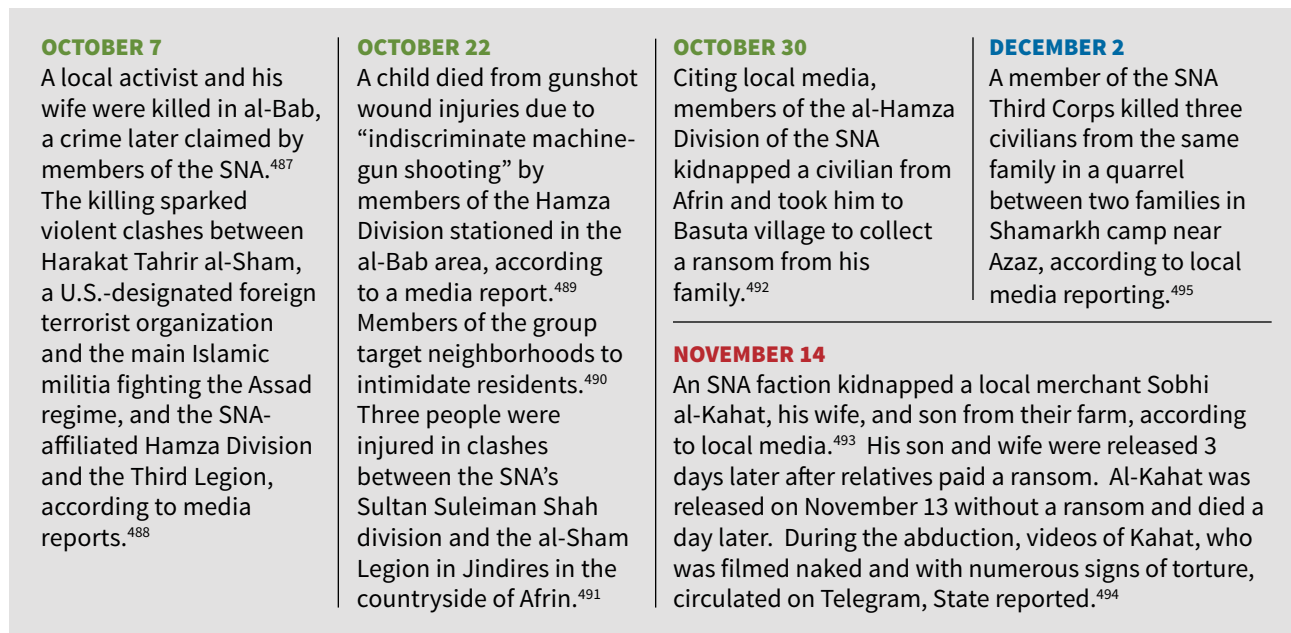
State reported that there is credible reporting the Turkish-supported Armed Opposition groups (TSOs), known broadly as the Syrian National Army (SNA), continued to commit abuses, including unlawful killings, severe physical abuse, and kidnapping for ransom during the quarter.<sup>483</sup> (See Figure 9.) In particular, State reported that its contacts said in late September that members of the SNA Third Legion escalated a campaign against independent Syrian civil society organizations.<sup>484</sup>

Following the July 2021 sanctioning of Ahrar al-Sharqiya for human rights abuses, State received reports that the group continued to function as a contingent of the SNA First Division.<sup>485</sup> However, State also received reports that “Ahrar al-Sharqiya’s TSO rivals have increased their reach and influence” within northwestern Syria due to Ahrar al-Sharqiya’s diminished stature from the sanctions.<sup>486</sup> Further information about TSOs is available in the classified appendix to this report.

Although social acceptance of Syrian refugees in Türkiye is decreasing, “most Syrian refugees probably still prefer to remain in Türkiye and will not voluntarily return to Syria,” according to State.

Figure 9.

**Reported TSO Abuses During the Quarter**



## HUMANITARIAN ASSISTANCE

Approximately 15.3 million Syrians—more than two thirds of the country’s population—need humanitarian assistance, according to OCHA’s 2023 Humanitarian Needs Overview, an overall increase of 700,000 people compared to the previous year.<sup>496</sup> OCHA noted that 12.1 million people are estimated to be food insecure, an increase of 100,000 people compared to 2022.<sup>497</sup>

The USAID Bureau for Humanitarian Assistance (BHA) and the State Bureau of Population, Refugees, and Migration (PRM) fund organizations that provide emergency food assistance; health services; water, sanitation, and hygiene assistance; and shelter in Syria and to Syrian refugees living in neighboring countries. USAID BHA and State PRM also support psychosocial programs; case management and referral services; and other programs to children and vulnerable individuals.<sup>498</sup>

In addition, USAID and State maintain early recovery programs and activities that aim to reduce immediate and protracted humanitarian needs by strengthening the self-reliance of affected populations. State and USAID programs also improve individual, household, and community resilience, thereby reducing dependence on external assistance.<sup>499</sup> The programs are based on assessed humanitarian needs among vulnerable populations and implemented across Syria by independent and impartial humanitarian agencies.<sup>500</sup>

Table 9.

**U.S. Humanitarian Funding for the Syria Regional Crisis Response in FY 2022**

Agency	
<b>USAID BHA</b>	\$980,226,455
<b>State PRM</b>	\$833,252,423
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>\$1,813,478,878</b>

**Note:** Funds committed or obligated in FY2022. These figures reflect publicly announced funding as of September 30, 2022.

**Source:** USAID, “Syria Complex Emergency Humanitarian Update #757,” 12/16/2022.

## Violence Decreases in Syria, but Humanitarian Needs Worsen

Although violence in Syria decreased to its lowest point in the 11-year conflict, the economic situation was at its worst, with humanitarian needs at the highest level seen so far.<sup>501</sup> The humanitarian situation was worsened by the COVID-19 pandemic and a drought that destroyed food crops.<sup>502</sup>

During the quarter, approximately 6 million Syrians were at risk due to gaps in winter assistance, a 28 percent increase from the previous year.<sup>503</sup> USAID reported that the United Nations intends to provide winter-related support for 4.2 million Syrians residing in camps, collective shelters, damaged and inadequate residential buildings in areas of high altitude and snowfall, and informal settlements.<sup>504</sup> USAID BHA provided more than \$13.6 million in winterization support through 13 NGO and UN implementers.<sup>505</sup> However, USAID noted that the sector is only 11 percent funded, leaving a funding gap of nearly \$162 million from the initial \$222.5 million funding request. This partial funding is sufficient to fund winterization assistance for only an estimated 1.3 million people this winter.<sup>506</sup>

In addition, Turkish airstrikes during the quarter damaged or destroyed both military and civilian infrastructure, including approximately 12,000 metric tons of wheat from grain silos in Darbasiyah, a hospital near Kobane, and local electrical grids, resulting in power outages.<sup>507</sup> As a result of the renewal of conflict, several USAID BHA NGO implementers limited non-essential staff movement and temporarily suspended activities, but resumed activities once the security situation improved.<sup>508</sup>

## Cholera Outbreak Continues in Northeast Syria

A cholera outbreak that began in late August continued to spread throughout northeastern Syria and Lebanon.<sup>509</sup> Vulnerable populations, including children under the age of 5 and women, were especially at risk, with IDP camps and other sites particularly threatened by the outbreak due to overcrowding and poor sanitation conditions.<sup>510</sup> As of December, the World Health Organization (WHO) reported more than 61,000 suspected cholera cases across all 14 governorates with 100 attributable deaths.<sup>511</sup> While some areas, including Dayr az-Zawr and Raqqah governorates, experienced a decrease in suspected cases, the overall cumulative cases continued to increase.<sup>512</sup>

USAID said that WHO and health/water, sanitation, and hygiene implementers confirmed that the outbreak was likely caused by a number of compounding factors, including various uses of untreated water, a lack of large-scale water quality testing, and consumption of contaminated water from the Euphrates River.<sup>513</sup> Low water levels in the Euphrates River and war-damaged water and sewage infrastructure also contributed to the spread of the disease.<sup>514</sup>

On November 29, approximately 2 million doses of oral cholera vaccine arrived in Damascus, according to the WHO.<sup>515</sup> USAID noted that local media reported that the Assad regime's Ministry of Health initiated a vaccination campaign from December 4 to 15, aiming to reach individuals from ages one year and older through mobile and static vaccination teams.<sup>516</sup> In Assad regime-held territories, health authorities designated more than 50 hospitals for the treatment of cholera and nearly 100 health facilities to provide oral rehydration therapy.<sup>517</sup>

During the quarter, approximately 6 million Syrians were at risk due to gaps in winter assistance, a 28 percent increase from the previous year.

**Water, sanitation and hygiene NGOs chlorinated approximately 45,700 water trucks in Hasakah City and more than 136 million gallons of water at filling points along the Euphrates River.**

NGOs in northeastern Syria continued chlorination of water points in response to the spread of cholera and delivered approximately 15 metric tons of chlorine powder to the SANES Raqqah and Tabqa water authorities.<sup>518</sup> In addition, water, sanitation and hygiene NGOs chlorinated approximately 45,700 water trucks in Hasakah City and more than 136 million gallons of water at filling points along the Euphrates River.<sup>519</sup>

USAID BHA implementers reported that continued drought conditions that compounded the impact of the outbreak.<sup>520</sup> Health organizations noted that the lack of funding and provision of medical resources or facilities had severely limited the ability to test water sources, procure necessary medical equipment and medications, or adequately surveil and report case trends.<sup>521</sup> USAID also noted challenges caused by delays in implementing water, sanitation, and hygiene interventions in the most affected localities at the village level; delays in the reporting of daily cases; limited access to some areas due to conflict or insecurity; a deteriorating water, sanitation, and hygiene situation compounded by high-priced safe, potable water; and limited funding.<sup>522</sup> In response to the outbreak, USAID implementers shifted existing funds to cover cholera-related activities and pivoted non-cholera related programming to fill critical gaps in health and water, sanitation, and hygiene services.<sup>523</sup>

## **NGO Report Highlights Issues with UN Procurement Processes**

In October, the Syria Legal Development Program published a report on the top 100 suppliers to UN procurements in Syria in 2019 and 2020 (94 percent of total procurement spending) that highlighted several issues with existing procurement processes, including: human rights abusers taking advantage of the system, contracting sanctioned individuals and entities; and failure to identify fronts and intermediaries. The report also expressed concern about the UN's reliance on large contracts, lack of transparency; accommodation of corruption; and failure to protect staff.<sup>524</sup>

The report found that at least 23 percent of funds went to companies with owners sanctioned by the United States, European Union, or United Kingdom.<sup>525</sup> While the United Nations is not bound by non-UN sanctions, the report stated that such lists can help determine whether the suppliers were sanctioned on human rights grounds under respective sanctions regimes.<sup>526</sup> The United Nations uses its own UN Security Council Consolidated List and has separate processes for listing and delisting of sanctioned entities.<sup>527</sup>

USAID reported that the UN agencies mentioned in the report included USAID-funded UN Children's Fund, World Food Programme, and WHO in Syria. The donor community met multiple times in 2022 to discuss the findings and to learn more about the United Nations' next steps.<sup>528</sup> USAID also reported tracking allegations that UN entities in Syria have been supporting individuals and businesses sanctioned by the U.S. and potentially involved in human rights abuses.<sup>529</sup> USAID has requested updates from the UN on its internal review of procurement practices and measures taken to improve human rights due diligence standards.<sup>530</sup>







At Al-Asad Air Base, Iraq, a U.S. Army Soldier shoots targets. (U.S. Army photo)

## OVERSIGHT ACTIVITIES

- 78 Strategic Planning
- 80 Audit, Inspection, and Evaluation Activity
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# OVERSIGHT ACTIVITIES

This section of the report provides information on Lead IG and partner agencies' strategic planning efforts; completed, ongoing, and planned oversight work related to audits, inspections, and evaluations; investigations; and hotline activities from October 1 through December 31, 2022.

## STRATEGIC PLANNING

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. This effort includes reviewing and analyzing completed oversight, management, and other relevant reports to identify systemic problems, trends, lessons learned, and best practices to inform future oversight projects. The Lead IG agencies issue an annual joint strategic oversight plan for each operation.

### FY 2023 JOINT STRATEGIC OVERSIGHT PLAN ACTIVITIES

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

The *FY 2023 Joint Strategic Oversight Plan for OIR* was published on October 3, 2022, as part of the *FY 2023 Comprehensive Oversight Plan for Overseas Contingency Operations*. The *FY 2023 Joint Strategic Oversight Plan for OIR* is organized by three strategic oversight areas: 1) Military Operations and Security Cooperation; 2) Diplomacy, Governance, Development, and Humanitarian Assistance; and 3) Support to Mission.

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.

In November 2022, the Overseas Contingency Operations Joint Planning Group held its 60th meeting. Guest speaker Alex Mahoney, Acting Deputy Director for the Office of Middle East, North Africa and Europe in USAID's Bureau for Humanitarian Assistance, spoke about ongoing humanitarian assistance in Syria.



**FY 2023  
Comprehensive  
Oversight Plan  
for Overseas  
Contingency  
Operations**

## Lead IG Strategic Oversight Areas

### **MILITARY OPERATIONS AND SECURITY COOPERATION**

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

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

### **DIPLOMACY, GOVERNANCE, DEVELOPMENT, AND HUMANITARIAN ASSISTANCE**

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

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

### **SUPPORT TO MISSION**

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

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

## AUDIT, INSPECTION, AND EVALUATION ACTIVITY

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

DoD OIG oversight and investigative staff maintained their presence in Kuwait, Qatar, and Bahrain during the quarter. State OIG staff in Baghdad and Frankfurt conducted oversight work of the Department of State's 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.

State OIG completed one report related to OIR during the quarter, related to its inspection of the programs and operation of the U.S Embassy in Kuwait City, Kuwait. Publicly releasable oversight reports are available online at the respective OIG's websites.

As of December 31, 2022, 11 projects related to OIR were ongoing and 1 project related to OIR was planned.

### FINAL REPORTS BY LEAD IG AGENCIES

#### DEPARTMENT OF STATE OFFICE OF INSPECTOR GENERAL

##### *Inspection of Embassy Kuwait City, Kuwait*

ISP-I-23-07; November 2, 2022

State OIG inspected the executive direction, policy and program implementation, resource management, and information management of the U.S Embassy in Kuwait City, Kuwait.

State OIG found that 1) the former Ambassador and the current Chargé d'Affaires led Embassy Kuwait City in a strategic and attentive manner consistent with State's leadership and management principles; 2) the embassy's management section did not manage embassy property in accordance with State standards which resulted in excess non-expendable and expendable property and unauthorized use of shipping containers for storage; 3) insufficient oversight by embassy managers caused a 1-year delay in an important embassy radio upgrade project; and 4) Embassy Kuwait successfully managed the evacuation from Afghanistan and processing through Kuwait of more than 5,000 Afghan refugees and 1,500 American citizens, permanent residents, and third-country nationals in August and September 2021.

State OIG made 15 recommendations to Embassy Kuwait City. In its response to a draft of this report, Embassy Kuwait City concurred with all 15 recommendations and State OIG considered all 15 recommendations resolved pending further action at the time the report was issued.

In September 2022, State OIG published a classified report related to the inspection of Embassy Kuwait City. A summary of that report was included in the classified appendix to last quarter's OIR quarterly report.

## ONGOING OVERSIGHT ACTIVITIES

As of December 31, 2022, the Lead IG agencies and their partner agencies had 11 ongoing projects related to OIR. Figure 10 describes the ongoing projects by strategic oversight area.

Tables 10 and 11, contained in Appendix G, lists the titles and objectives for each of these projects. The following sections highlight some of these ongoing projects by strategic oversight area.

### Military Operations and Security Cooperation

- The **DoD OIG** is conducting an evaluation to determine whether the DoD properly identified and provided proper care to Service members who sustained traumatic brain injuries, including those who served in Iraq and Syria.

### Support to Mission

- The **DoD OIG** is conducting an audit to determine whether the DoD is effectively monitoring sensitive equipment provided to the Iraqi government.
- **State OIG** is conducting an inspection to evaluate the programs and operations of the U.S Embassy in Beirut, Lebanon, to include any assistance being provided to Syrian refugees.
- **USAID OIG** is conducting an audit to determine whether USAID has effectively implemented its New Partnerships Initiative, which includes support for religious and ethnic minorities in Iraq that were victimized by ISIS.

Figure 10.

### Ongoing Projects by Strategic Oversight Area



## PLANNED OVERSIGHT PROJECTS

As of December 31, 2022, the Lead IG agencies and their partner agencies had one planned project related to OIR, under the Governance, Humanitarian Assistance, and Development strategic oversight area:

### Diplomacy, Governance, Development, and Humanitarian Assistance

- **USAID OIG** plans to conduct an audit to determine whether USAID has adequately strengthened Iraqi business capacity through economic development activities.

## INVESTIGATIONS AND HOTLINE ACTIVITY

### INVESTIGATIONS

The investigative components of the Lead IG agencies and their partner agencies continued to conduct investigative activity related to OIR during the quarter. However, COVID-19 limitations led to a decrease in the overall number of open investigations. The DoD OIG’s criminal investigative component, the Defense Criminal Investigative Service (DCIS), maintained investigative personnel in Bahrain, Kuwait, and Qatar, 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.

### Investigative Activity Related To OIR

During this quarter, Lead IG investigations resulted in one conviction based on an investigation into kickbacks and bribery allegations, which is discussed below.

During the quarter, the investigative branches of the Lead IG agencies and their partner agencies closed 7 investigations, initiated 7 investigations, and coordinated on 77 open investigations. The open investigations involve grant and procurement fraud, corruption, theft, program irregularities, computer intrusions, and human trafficking allegations. As noted in Figure 11, the majority of primary offense locations and allegations related to OIR originated in Iraq, Kuwait, and Qatar.

The Lead IG agencies and partners continued to coordinate their investigative efforts through the Fraud and Corruption Investigative Working Group, which consists of representatives from DCIS, State OIG, USAID OIG, the U.S. Army Criminal Investigation Division (CID), the Naval Criminal Investigative Service, and the Air Force Office of Special Investigations.

Figure 11.

**Types of Allegations and Primary Offense Locations, October 1, 2022–December 31, 2022**

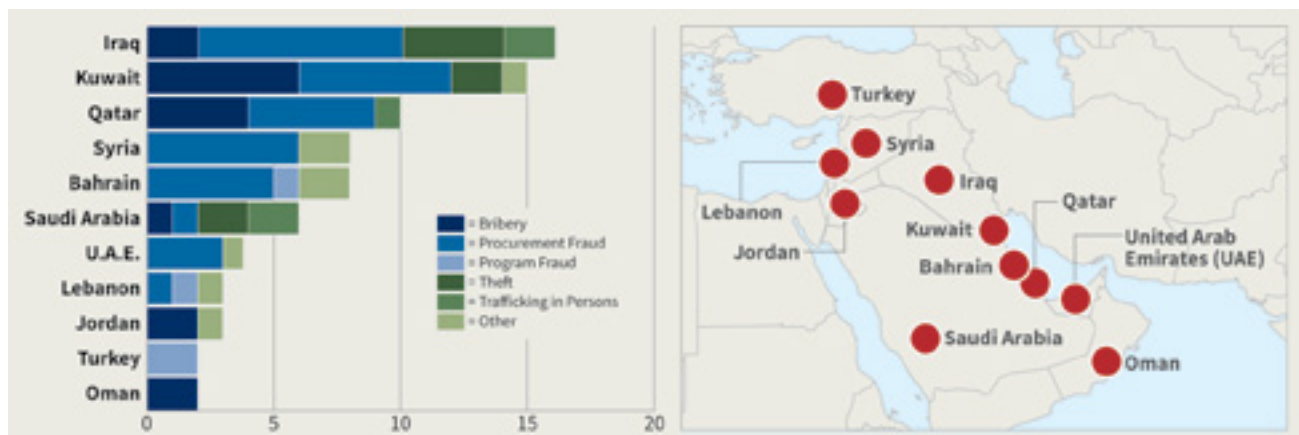


Figure 12.

**Open Investigations and Sources of Allegations, October 1, 2022–December 31, 2022**

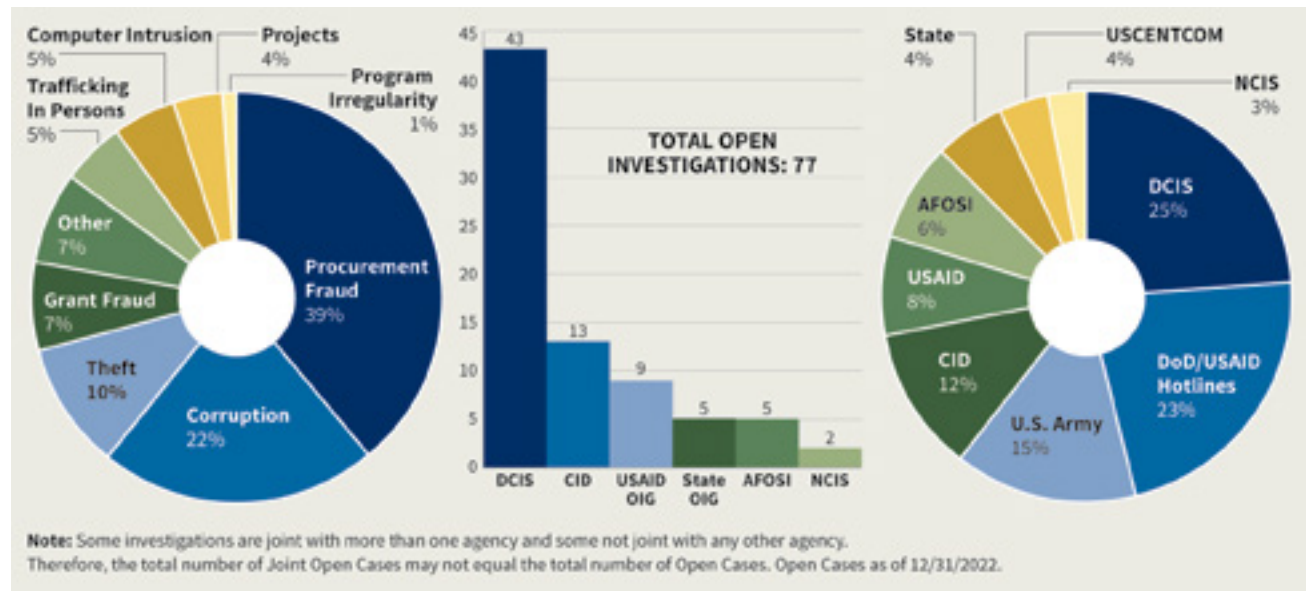


Figure 12 describes open investigations related to OIR and sources of allegations. During the quarter, the Fraud and Corruption Investigative Working Group conducted 56 fraud awareness briefings for 1,098 participants.

**Former U.S. Army Contractor Pleads Guilty to Gratuities to Steer U.S. Government Contracts**

The U.S. District Court for the District of Columbia sentenced an Indian national on October 28 to 24 months of probation in connection with his role in a scheme with a former Department of the Army civilian employee to steer contracts to his company.

As a result of a joint DCIS and CID investigation, Gandhi Raj Sankaralingam surrendered himself to U.S. law enforcement officials just before his sentencing. The investigation revealed that Sankaralingam conspired with a former Army civilian employee at Camp Arifjan, a U.S. Army base in Kuwait that supports the OIR mission. The former employee, Ephraim Garcia, was previously sentenced to 24 months in jail, and 36 months of supervised probation upon release.

**Investigative Activity Related to Legacy Cases**

DCIS has four ongoing “legacy” investigations related to crimes involving the OIR area of operations that occurred prior to the formal designation of OIR.

## HOTLINE

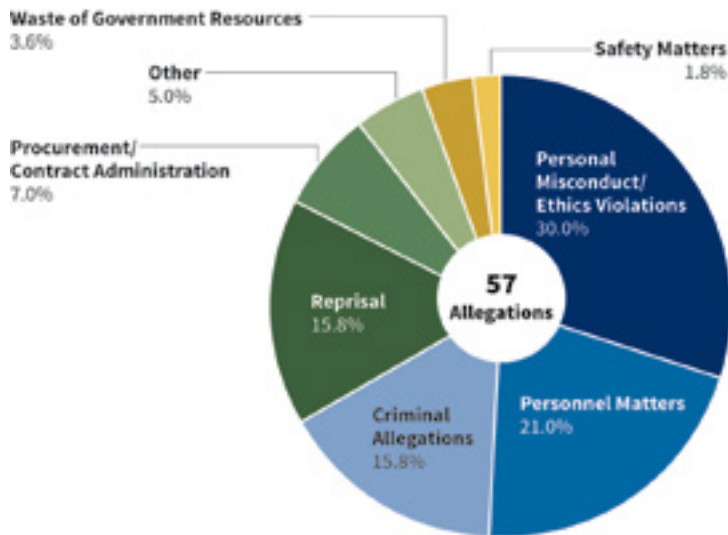
Each Lead IG agency maintains its own hotline to receive complaints specific to its agency. The hotlines provide a confidential, reliable means for individuals to report violations of law, rule, or regulation; mismanagement; gross waste of funds; or abuse of authority. A DoD OIG Hotline investigator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

During the quarter, the DoD OIG Hotline investigator received 57 allegations and referred 59 cases to Lead IG agencies and other investigative organizations. In some instances, a case may contain multiple subjects and allegations.

As noted in Figure 13, the majority of allegations during the reporting period related to personal misconduct (ethical violations), personnel matters, criminal allegations, and retaliation.

Figure 13.

### Hotline Activities











Mine-Resistant Ambush Protected Vehicles  
at an undisclosed location in Southwest Asia.  
(U.S. Air Force photo)

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## APPENDIX A

# Classified Appendix to this Report

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

## APPENDIX B

# About the Lead Inspector General

The Inspector General Act of 1978, as amended (5 U.S.C. Section 419, previously found at 5 U.S.C. App, Section 8L) established the Lead Inspector General (Lead IG) framework for oversight of overseas contingency operations. The primary 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 Chair of the Council of Inspectors General on Integrity and Efficiency to appoint a Lead Inspector General from among the inspectors general of the primary 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.

The Chair of the Council of Inspectors General for Integrity and Efficiency designated the DoD IG as the Lead IG for Operation Inherent Resolve. The State IG is the Associate Lead IG for the operation.

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 \$100,000,000.

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 covers the period from October 1 through December 31, 2022. 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 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

# Department of Justice Prosecutions and Activities against Terrorism

Since 2014, the Department of Justice (DoJ) has charged more than 225 individuals with international terrorism-related conduct relating to ISIS, and obtained more than 180 convictions. The remaining cases are ongoing. A portion of the aforementioned cases involve individuals who could be described as foreign terrorist fighters or homegrown violent extremists linked to ISIS, as well as those who may have assisted their conduct, obstructed investigations, or otherwise involved an identified link to ISIS.

The following examples include details on indictments, convictions, or sentences related to foreign terrorist fighters and homegrown violent extremists related to ISIS activity from October 1 through December 31, 2022:

- **On October 17, 2022, in the Southern District of California, Abdullahi Ahmed Abdullahi** was sentenced to 20 years in prison and three years of supervised release for conspiring with others to provide material support to terrorists engaged in violent activities such as murder, kidnapping, and maiming of persons in Syria. According to court documents, Abdullahi provided both money and personnel to support the violent jihadist activities of ISIS. From November 2013 through March 2014, Abdullahi encouraged, aided, and financially assisted six North American nationals in traveling to Syria, where they joined ISIS and engaged in armed battles to gain control of the territories and civilian populations within Syria. Abdullahi admitted that following the departure of those foreign fighters, he also caused money to be wired to third-party ISIS intermediaries in Gaziantep, Turkey, located approximately 40 miles from the Syrian border, for the purpose of continuing to support his coconspirators in violent jihadist activities on the battlefield. All six individuals were subsequently reportedly killed fighting for ISIS.
- **On October 18, 2022, in the Eastern District of New York, Lafarge S.A., a global building materials manufacturer and its subsidiary** pleaded guilty to a one-count criminal information charging them with conspiring to provide material support and resources in Northern Syria from 2013 to 2014 to ISIS and the al-Nusra Front. Immediately following the defendants' guilty pleas, they were sentenced to terms of probation and to pay financial penalties, including criminal fines and forfeiture, totaling \$777.78 million. According to court documents, Lafarge S.A., headquartered in Paris, France, and Lafarge Cement Syria S.A., headquartered in Damascus, Syria, schemed to pay ISIS and al-Nusra Front in exchange for permission to operate a cement plant in Syria from 2013 to 2014, which enabled Lafarge Cement Syria to obtain approximately \$70.3 million in revenue.
- **On November 1, 2022, in the Eastern District of Virginia, Allison Fluke-Ekren** was sentenced to 20 years in prison for organizing and leading an all-female military battalion in Syria on behalf of ISIS. According to court documents, Fluke-Ekren traveled overseas and, from in or about September 2011 through in or about May 2019, engaged in terrorist acts in multiple countries, including Syria, Libya, and Iraq. Fluke-Ekren ultimately served as the leader and organizer of an ISIS military battalion, known as the Khatiba Nusaybah, where she trained women on the use of automatic firing AK-47 assault rifles, grenades, and suicide belts. Over 100 women and young girls, some as young as 10 years old, received military training from Fluke-Ekren in Syria on behalf of ISIS.

- **On November 8, 2022, in the Western District of Pennsylvania, Mustafa Mousab Alowemer** was sentenced to 208 months in prison, followed by a lifetime of supervised release, for attempting to provide material support to ISIS. Alowemer pled guilty on September 16, 2021, to one count of attempting to provide material support to ISIS in connection with his plan to attack a church in Pittsburgh. According to court documents, Alowemer plotted to bomb a church located on the north side of Pittsburgh using an explosive device. His stated motivation to conduct such an attack was to support the cause of ISIS and to inspire other ISIS supporters in the United States to join together and commit similar acts in the name of ISIS. Alowemer also targeted the church, which he described as a “Nigerian Christian” church, to “take revenge for our [ISIS] brothers in Nigeria.” Alowemer was aware that numerous people in the proximity of the church could be killed by the explosion.
- **On November 17, 2022, in the Northern District of Illinois, Thomas Osadzinski** was sentenced to 7½ years in prison for attempting to provide material support to ISIS. Evidence presented at trial revealed that ISIS and its supporters disseminated the terror group’s propaganda materials on social media to recruit fighters and inspire violence against the United States and other countries. Many social media platforms removed ISIS media content due to the violent nature of the materials. Osadzinski, a U.S. citizen, designed, used, and taught a process using a computer script to make ISIS propaganda more conveniently disseminated online. The process would automatically copy and preserve ISIS media postings in an organized format, allowing social media users to continue to conveniently access and share the content. In 2019, Osadzinski shared his script—and instructions for how to use it—with individuals whom he believed to be ISIS supporters and members of pro-ISIS media organizations. Unbeknownst to Osadzinski, the individuals were covert FBI employees and a person confidentially working with law enforcement.
- **On November 29, 2022, in the Western District of Washington, Elvin Hunter Bgorn Williams** was sentenced to 4 years in prison and 15 years of supervised release for providing material support to ISIS. According to the plea agreement, in November 2020, Williams began telling family members he was a member of ISIS. Williams posted a video on Facebook in which he swore an oath of loyalty to a leader of ISIS. Using confidential sources close to Williams, the FBI monitored his activity and became aware of his efforts to travel to the Middle East and join ISIS. Williams expressed to his associates that if he could not travel overseas, he would commit an attack in the U.S. on behalf of ISIS. Williams began communicating with those he believed were ISIS recruiters who could get him to an ISIS terror cell in the Middle East or other parts of the world. In May 2021, Williams obtained a passport and pawned a laptop computer to raise funds for his travel. In early May 2021, Williams booked an airline ticket from Seattle to Amsterdam and on to Egypt to join ISIS. On Friday May 28, 2021, he went to the Seattle-Tacoma Airport to catch the first leg of his international flight. Williams was arrested at the departure gate.
- **On November 30, 2022, in the District of Connecticut, Ahmad Khalil Elshazly** pleaded guilty to attempting to provide material support to ISIS. According to court documents and statements made in court, beginning in approximately September 2018, Elshazly expressed a desire to travel to Syria and the surrounding area to fight on behalf of ISIS. In numerous conversations online and in person, he pledged allegiance to ISIS and its leader, Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi. On December 14, 2019, Elshazly paid \$500 to a person he believed was an ISIS facilitator who would be able to smuggle him out of the U.S. to Türkiye. He further believed that travelling to Türkiye would enable him to connect with ISIS members overseas who, in turn, would assist him with traveling to ISIS within Syria. On December 15, 2019, Elshazly was arrested after he arrived in Stonington, Connecticut, where he expected to board a boat to begin his trip.

In addition, 14 people have been transferred to the United States from Iraq and Syria to face federal criminal charges related to terrorism since 2014. There were no transfers to the United States from Iraq and Syria during this quarter.

The DoJ's Justice Attaché engaged Iraqi security and legal partners on counterterrorism matters, including with senior officials of the Iraqi Counterterrorism Service (CTS) and the investigative judge assigned to the CTS to improve warrant and prosecution packages for CTS targets, including issues pertaining to electronic surveillance and forensic laboratory capabilities.

The Justice Attaché and Treasury Attaché at the U.S. Embassy in Baghdad also significantly contributed to the design and approval of a two-year program to be implemented by the United Nations Development Programme, funded by the State Bureau of International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs in the amount of \$5.3 million, that includes the following objectives:

- Expand the reach of the Anti-Money Laundering-Countering the Financing of Terrorism Office—Iraq's Financial Intelligence Unit—including by designating officials as liaison officers and enhancing their capacities.
- Identify, disrupt, and dismantle illicit finance activities by implementing consistent and modern private sector compliance, regulatory and investigative techniques, including through improved collection and analysis of suspicious transaction reports to improve collaboration among the Financial Intelligence Unit, the judiciary, and law enforcement, anti-corruption, and auditing agencies.
- Reduce the impact of illicit finance activities and improve suspicious transaction reports and currency reporting compliance by developing a broad "early warning system" through strategic training partnerships with Iraqi government institutions, including those agencies supporting investigations and prosecutions, to improve the quantity and quality of reporting.

The DoJ National Security Division Attaché continued to support civilian prosecutorial dispositions for foreign terrorist fighters and other terrorists, including efforts to counter the financing of terrorism. This includes:

- Reviewing intelligence and available information to determine if criminal prosecutions can be brought against suspected foreign terrorist fighters and other terrorists, including those being detained in Syria by partner forces, in either U.S. or foreign courts;
- Navigating the complexities of foreign legal systems and assisting in assembling available information for use by international partners in foreign investigations and prosecutions; and
- Assisting both interagency and international partners at the platform in navigating complex legal issues associated with the use of intelligence in criminal investigations and court proceedings, and issues related to the admissibility of evidence (converting intelligence into evidence).

Other DoJ programs continued, including through the DoJ's Office of International Affairs, which assists partner nations in developing institutions needed for effective mutual legal assistance and extradition cooperation. In coordination with State, experts from the DoJ Office of International Affairs worked with international counterparts, particularly throughout Asia, Africa, and the Middle East, to help partner countries build effective central authorities.



These institutions support effective international cooperation in criminal matters and enable the legal processes necessary to bring terrorists and other criminals to justice under the rule of law.

FBI personnel are not involved in training or capacity-building programs with coalition partners in Iraq, outside of routine interactions with host nation partners on a variety of criminal and national security matters. The FBI does not have a presence in Syria for capacity-building activities. However, the FBI does have personnel providing support to interagency and foreign partners through international intelligence sharing efforts.

The FBI aids in the repatriation process by attempting to obtain biometrics of all individuals prior to them leaving the conflict zone. Although the FBI does not assist in detention operations in Syria, the FBI works with Syrian partners to monitor the movement of prisoners of interest. Information provided by the Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) may include information on women and children who are located at various IDP camps.



## APPENDIX E

# Department of the Treasury and Department of State Actions against Terrorist Financing

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

### DEPARTMENT OF THE TREASURY DESIGNATIONS AND ACTIVITIES

Since 2014, the Secretary of the Treasury has designated 130 individuals and entities providing support to ISIS pursuant to Executive Order 13224. The Secretary of the Treasury did not sanction any individuals or organizations that were related to OIR during the quarter. No individuals or organizations sanctioned for providing support to ISIS were removed from the sanctions list during the quarter.

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

Treasury continued to work with interagency and Coalition partners, including the Iraqi government, to prioritize identifying ISIS's financial reserves and financial leaders, disrupting its financial facilitation networks in Iraq, and designating ISIS facilitators, front companies, and fundraisers in Iraq, Syria, Turkey, and elsewhere. Treasury also takes a leadership role in the Global Coalition to Defeat ISIS, serving as a co-lead of the Counter ISIS Finance Group along with its counterparts from Italy and Saudi Arabia. On November 8 and 9, 2022, Treasury co-led a virtual CFIG meeting with dozens of Coalition members and observers, including Iraqi partners, to exchange information on ISIS financing activities and the efforts to counter them across multiple continents. On December 6 and 7, 2022, the Counter ISIS Finance Group met in The Hague with the other Coalition working groups and presented to the Political Directors' Meeting a brief overview of the state of ISIS's finances and the group's priorities in the coming year.

Treasury reported that ISIS's financial situation remained largely unchanged since last quarter. ISIS continued to raise funds through extortion of oil smuggling networks in eastern Syria, kidnapping for ransom targeting civilian businesses and populations, extortion, looting, and the possible operation of front companies. The group relied on money services businesses, including hawalas (informal money transfer networks), throughout Iraq, Syria, and Turkey to transfer funds internationally. ISIS supporters also use virtual currencies and online fundraising platforms to transfer funds, including to internally displaced persons camps. For example, in the al-Hol camp in Syria, ISIS supporters have received up to \$20,000 per month via the hawala system. The majority of these transfers originated outside Syria or passed through neighboring countries, such as Turkey.

Despite substantial leadership losses this year, ISIS Core remains intact and maintains access to as much as \$25 million in cash reserves held in Syria and Iraq. The terrorist group amassed these funds during its 2014-2017 occupation of Iraqi and Syrian territories by selling oil, extorting local economies, and looting banks. ISIS leadership uses these funds to support its branches and networks around the world, finance extremist operations, maintain a loyal cadre of supporters, conduct recruitment, secure the release of its members from detention centers and internally displaced persons camps, and pay family members of deceased and imprisoned ISIS personnel. However, ISIS Core's revenue streams are diminishing due to pressure from the military forces of the Global Coalition to Defeat ISIS and law enforcement actions in the region. Treasury estimated that ISIS militants operating in Syria and Iraq spend more money per month than they can generate during the same period. As a result, ISIS leaders rely on declining incomes from extorting local businesses, kidnapping for ransom, looting, and sporadic external donations to fill their coffers. This year, ISIS leaders in Iraq and Syria have increasingly emphasized the importance of fundraising to their subordinates, probably because the group recognizes that it will be unable to support members without increasing their revenue in the coming years.

#### **DEPARTMENT OF STATE DESIGNATIONS**

This quarter, the Secretary of State did not make any Specially Designated Global Terrorist designations related to OIR.

## APPENDIX F

### **Department of Homeland Security Activities against Terrorism**

The Department of Homeland Security (DHS) continues to work with interagency partners, including from the Intelligence Community and the DoD, to identify, analyze, and mitigate the threat posed by ISIS, its affiliates, and its associates in traveling to the Homeland to potentially conduct attacks. The Intelligence Community agrees that the most likely threat in the U.S. is from lone actors inspired by a range of ideologies, including foreign terrorist organization violent extremist messaging, which groups like ISIS and al-Qaeda regularly disseminate in attempts to encourage their U.S.-based supporters to launch attacks on U.S. soil.

Additionally, DHS continues to work with interagency partners, particularly various components within the DoD and the FBI, through established interagency processes to prioritize biometric and biographic collection of detained ISIS foreign terrorist fighters. The collection of biographic and biometric information of ISIS foreign terrorist fighters supports DHS' screening and vetting efforts. Individual's applying for travel authorization or benefits or who are encountered by Customs and Border Protection, the Transportation Security Administration, or other officers are biographically and biometrically vetted. These efforts ensure DHS personnel are alerted to any potential matches associated with ISIS Foreign Terrorist Fighter enrollments.

## APPENDIX G

# Ongoing Oversight Projects

Tables 10 and 11 list the titles and objectives for Lead IG and partner agencies' ongoing oversight projects related to OIR.

Table 10.

### Ongoing Oversight Projects Related to OIR by Lead IG Agencies, as of December 31, 2022

#### DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE OFFICE OF INSPECTOR GENERAL

##### ***Audit of the Army's Management of Army Prepositioned Stock-5 Equipment***

To determine whether the Army accurately maintained and accounted for Army Prepositioned Stock - 5 equipment, to include at facilities that support the OIR mission, in accordance with Federal and DoD policies.

##### ***Audit of Army Oversight of the Department of Defense Language Interpretation and Translation Enterprise II Contract***

To determine whether the Army provided oversight of and appropriately staffed the DoD Language Interpretation and Translation Enterprise II contract in the U.S. Central Command and OIR area of responsibility to ensure the contractors fulfilled requirements.

##### ***Audit of Tracking, Recovery, and Reuse of Department of Defense-Owned Shipping Containers***

To determine to what extent the Army, Navy, and Marine Corps complied with DoD requirements to track, recover, and reuse shipping containers, including those at facilities that support OIR, and included those containers in an accountable property system of record.

##### ***Evaluation of the DoD's Management of Traumatic Brain Injury***

To determine the extent to which the Defense Health Agency and Military Service medical departments implemented policies and procedures, and provided oversight, to ensure that Service members who sustained traumatic brain injuries—including those who served in Iraq and Syria—were identified and screened to determine their appropriate level of care.

##### ***Audit of Enhanced End-Use Monitoring of Sensitive Equipment Given to the Government of Iraq***

To determine whether the DoD is conducting enhanced end-use monitoring for sensitive equipment provided to the Government of Iraq in accordance with the DoD Security Assistance Management Manual and the transfer agreement terms and conditions.

##### ***Evaluation of Combatant Command Military Deception Planning***

To determine the extent to which the combatant commands have effectively conducted military deception (MILDEC) planning in support of ongoing OIR operations.

#### DEPARTMENT OF STATE OFFICE OF INSPECTOR GENERAL

##### ***Inspection of U.S. Embassy Beirut, Lebanon***

To evaluate the programs and operations of the U.S Embassy in Beirut, Lebanon, to include any U.S. assistance being provided to Syrian refugees. This inspection will also produce a report with classified findings.

##### ***Audit of the Planning, Design, Construction, and Commissioning of the Power Plant at U.S. Embassy Baghdad, Iraq***

To determine whether the Department of State followed Federal and State requirements and guidelines in the planning, design, construction, and commissioning of the central power plant at Embassy Baghdad.

##### ***Audit of Physical Security Standards for Department of State Temporary Structures at Selected Overseas Posts***

To determine whether the Department of State managed the use of temporary structures at overseas posts in compliance with applicable physical security standards and procedures, including maintaining an accurate and complete inventory of temporary structures used for residential and office purposes.

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

***Audit of USAID's New Partnerships Initiative***

To determine the extent to which USAID has established a framework for effectively implementing the New Partnerships Initiative as well as processes for measuring the initiative's performance and results, which has included support for religious and ethnic minorities in Iraq that were victimized by ISIS.

Table 11.

**Ongoing Oversight Projects Related to OIR by Lead IG Partner Agency, as of December 31, 2022**

## ARMY AUDIT AGENCY

***Followup Audit of Army Prepositioned Stocks (APS)-5 Issue and Return***

To determine if commands implemented recommendations 1, 2, 5, and 6 from Report A-2020-0087-AXZ (APS-5 Issue and Return), dated September 28, 2020, and, if so, that the corrective actions mitigated the conditions identified in the report.

## APPENDIX H

### Planned Oversight Projects

Table 12 lists the title and objective for Lead IG planned oversight projects.

Table 12.

**Planned Projects Related to OIR by Lead IG Agency, as of December 31, 2022**

## 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.

## ACRONYMS

Acronym	
BHA	USAID Bureau for Humanitarian Assistance
CID	U.S. Army Criminal Investigations Division
CJTF-OIR	Combined Joint Task Force–Operation Inherent Resolve
CTEF	Counter-ISIS Train and Equip Fund
CTS	Counter Terrorism Service
DCIS	Defense Criminal Investigative Service
DIA	Defense Intelligence Agency
DNGO	Department of Non-Governmental Organizations
DoD	Department of Defense
FBI	Federal Bureau of Investigation
FMF	Foreign Military Financing
FMS	Foreign Military Sales
FY	fiscal year
IALO	Iraqi Air Liaison Officer
IDP	internally displaced person
IED	improvised explosive device
IKR	Iraqi Kurdistan Region
InSF	Internal Security Forces
IqAAC	Iraqi Army Aviation Command
ISF	Iraqi Security Forces
ISR	intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance
ITAC	Iraqi Tactical Air Controller
ITC	Iraqi Intelligence Tactical Controller
JIOC	Joint Information Operations Center
JOC-I	Joint Operations Command–Iraq
KCL	Kurdistan Coordination Line
KDP	Kurdistan Democratic Party
KRG	Kurdistan Regional Government
KSF	Kurdish Security Forces
Lead IG Agencies	The DoD, State, and USAID OIGs

Acronym	
MAG	Military Advisory Group
MoD	Ministry of Defense
MoPA	Ministry of Peshmerga Affairs
MSF	Médecins Sans Frontières
NGO	nongovernmental organization
OC	operations command
OCHA	UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs
OIG	Office of Inspector General
OIR	Operation Inherent Resolve
OSC-I	Office of Security Cooperation–Iraq
OUSD(P)	Office of the Undersecretary 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
SANES	Self-Administration of North East Syria
SDF	Syrian Democratic Forces
SFA	Syrian Free Army
SOAG	Special Operations Advisory Group
SNA	Syrian National Army
State	Department of State
TSO	Turkish-supported Armed Opposition
UAS	unmanned aerial system
UN	United Nations
UNSCR	UN Security Council Resolution
USAID	U.S. Agency for International Development
USCENTCOM	The U.S. Central Command
USEUCOM	The U.S. European Command
WHO	World Health Organization

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Syrian Internal Security Forces training academy members salute during a graduation ceremony. (U.S. Army Reserve photo)



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