

LEAD INSPECTOR GENERAL | REPORT TO THE UNITED STATES CONGRESS



OVERSEAS CONTINGENCY OPERATIONS

OPERATION INHERENT RESOLVE
OPERATION PACIFIC EAGLE-PHILIPPINES

OCTOBER 1, 2017-DECEMBER 31, 2017

LEAD INSPECTOR GENERAL MISSION

The Lead Inspector General for Overseas Contingency Operations coordinates among the Inspectors General specified under the law to:

- Develop a joint strategic plan to conduct comprehensive oversight over all aspects of the contingency operation
- Ensure independent and effective oversight of all programs and operations of the Federal Government in support of the contingency operation through either joint or individual audits, inspections, and investigations
- Promote economy, efficiency, and effectiveness and prevent, detect, and deter fraud, waste, and abuse
- Perform analyses to ascertain the accuracy of information provided by Federal agencies relating to obligations and expenditures, costs of programs and projects, accountability of funds, and the award and execution of major contracts, grants, and agreements
- Report quarterly and biannually to the Congress and the public on the contingency operation and activities of the Lead Inspector General

(Pursuant to sections 2, 4, and 8L of the Inspector General Act of 1978)

FOREWORD

We are pleased to submit the Lead Inspector General (Lead IG) quarterly report to the United States Congress on Operation Inherent Resolve (OIR) and Operation Pacific Eagle—Philippines (OPE-P). This is our 12th quarterly report on OIR and 1st quarterly report on OPE-P, discharging our individual and collective agency oversight responsibilities pursuant to sections 2, 4, and 8L of the Inspector General Act of 1978.

On September 1, 2017, the Secretary of Defense designated OPE-P as a contingency operation to support the Philippine government and military in their efforts to isolate, degrade, and defeat affiliates of the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS) and other terrorist organizations in the Philippines. On November 16, 2017, as required by statute, the Chair of the Council of the Inspectors General on Integrity and Efficiency designated the DoD Inspector General as the Lead IG for OPE-P. The DoD IG designated the DoS IG the Associate IG for OPE-P.

This is the first quarter we are reporting on the OPE-P contingency operation. Because OPE-P is new and related to OIR's efforts to defeat ISIS, we have combined our required reporting on OPE-P with our reporting on OIR. We therefore included a chapter on the status of OPE-P in this report.

With regard to OIR, U.S. strategy to defeat ISIS involves support to military operations associated with OIR, as well as diplomacy, governance, security programs and activities, and humanitarian assistance. This report provides information on the status of OIR in sections organized by five Strategic Oversight Areas identified by the Lead IG agencies. The Strategic Oversight Areas are:

- Security
- Governance and Civil Society
- Stabilization
- Support to Mission, and
- Humanitarian Assistance

This report also discusses oversight work for both operations conducted by the Lead IG Offices of Inspector General and our partner oversight agencies, as well as ongoing and future oversight work, for the first quarter of Fiscal Year 2018 ending December 31, 2017.

Working in collaboration, we remain committed to providing comprehensive oversight and timely reporting on OIR and OPE-P.



Glenn A. Fine

Glenn A. Fine
Principal Deputy Inspector
General Performing the Duties of
the Inspector General
U.S. Department of Defense



Steve A. Linick

Steve A. Linick
Inspector General
U.S. Department of State
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Board of Governors



Ann Calvaresi Barr

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Development

REPORT STRUCTURE

This report describes Operation Inherent Resolve and Operation Pacific Eagle—Philippines according to the following presentation:

An Executive Summary of both OCOs

The status of Operation Inherent Resolve, organized by five Strategic Oversight Areas adopted by the Lead IG agencies:

- Security
- Governance and Civil Society
- Stabilization
- Support to Mission
- Humanitarian Assistance

Lead IG Agencies Completed Oversight regarding Operation Inherent Resolve

Lead IG Agencies Planned Oversight regarding Operation Inherent Resolve

The status of Operation Pacific Eagle—Philippines, organized by the following topics:

- Mission
- Background and Status of Operations
- Funding
- Humanitarian Assistance
- Oversight Activities

On the Cover

(Top row) Students pose for a photo at a primary school in Iraq. (U.S. Army photo); Iraqi security forces fire a BM-21 Grad near Rawa, Iraq. (U.S. Army photo); an F-22 receives fuel over the Euphrates River, Iraq (U.S. Air Force photo); a Philippine soldier stands in the Marawi battle zone (Stars and Stripes/Seth Robson photo). (Bottom row): Members of the Iraqi Special Forces provide security during a final air mobility operations exercise at Camp Taji, Iraq (U.S. Army photo); airmen perform pre-flight checks on an F-15E Strike Eagle before a sortie in support of OIR (U.S. Air Force Photo).

MESSAGE FROM THE LEAD INSPECTOR GENERAL



Glenn A. Fine

I am pleased to present this quarterly report on the status of two overseas contingency operations: Operation Inherent Resolve (OIR) and Operation Pacific Eagle-Philippines (OPE-P). This is the 12th report on OIR and the U.S. strategy to defeat the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS). It is the first report on OPE-P, a new overseas contingency operation to support the Philippine government and military in their efforts to isolate, degrade, and defeat ISIS affiliates and other terrorist organizations in the Philippines. This report summarizes the quarter's key events, and describes completed, ongoing, and planned Lead Inspector General (Lead IG) and partner agency oversight work of this activity.

During this quarter, ISIS lost control of Raqqah, its self-proclaimed capital in Syria, as well as its last strongholds in the desert towns in Iraq's Anbar province. Also in this quarter, the Iraqi Prime Minister declared victory over ISIS. However, threats from ISIS persist. Pockets of ISIS fighters remained in Iraq and Syria, and their terrorist operations continued, including suicide attacks on population centers. As we describe in this report, the U.S. and Coalition partners continued their train, advise, and assist efforts, and U.S. civilian agencies also intensified stabilization efforts in areas newly liberated from ISIS.

This quarter, the Lead IG agencies and our oversight partners issued seven reports related to OIR. These reports included assessments of counter narcotics activities, facilities maintenance, contract management, weapons destruction, and the humanitarian assistance effort in Syria. In addition, Lead IG investigations resulted in two criminal convictions, one criminal charge, seven contractor suspensions and debarments, the removal of two employees from Federal service, and six personnel actions. Lead IG agencies and their partner agencies closed 15 investigations, initiated 8 new investigations, and coordinated on 74 open investigations involving procurement fraud, corruption, grant fraud, theft, program irregularities, computer intrusions, and trafficking-in-persons.

In January, just after the quarter ended, my Lead IG colleagues and I visited Iraq and Afghanistan to meet with the military commanders and Department of State and U.S. Agency for International Development officials to be briefed on the status of the overseas contingency operations and the U.S. Government programs and operations that support them. We also met with our staff deployed to the region. The meetings were candid, productive, and comprehensive. We sought to obtain a fuller understanding of the status of U.S. efforts in the region, to assess the whole-of-government approach to defeating ISIS, and to help develop our oversight plans for overseas contingency operations. We will provide more details on this trip and the key issues that emerged in subsequent reporting.

My Lead IG colleagues thank the OIG employees who are deployed abroad, who travel to the region, and who work hard here in the United States to perform their important mission of providing oversight of overseas contingency operations.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Glenn A. Fine".

Glenn A. Fine

Principal Deputy Inspector General Performing the Duties of Inspector General
U.S. Department of Defense





Members of the Iraqi Special Forces provide security during a final air mobility operations exercise at Camp Taji, Iraq. (U.S. Army photo)

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STRATEGIC REPORTING AREAS FOR OPERATION INHERENT RESOLVE

This quarterly report to Congress on Operation Inherent Resolve (OIR) organizes its coverage by the five Strategic Oversight Areas (SOAs) adopted by the Lead IG agencies. These areas are Security, Governance and Civil Society, Stabilization, Support to Mission, and Humanitarian Assistance.

- **Security** is focused on determining the degree to which OIR is accomplishing its mission to defeat the Islamic State in Iraq and Syria (ISIS) by training, advising, and assisting the Iraqi Security Forces (ISF) and vetted Syrian opposition forces, and conducting counterterrorism operations.
- **Governance and Civil Society** is focused on the ability of the host-nation government, at all levels, to represent and serve its citizens.
- **Stabilization** focuses on U.S. Government efforts to enable persons affected by the overseas contingency operation to return to or remain in their homes with the expectation of basic security and government and public services.
- **Support to Mission** focuses on administrative, logistical, and management efforts that enable the United States to conduct military operations, empower host-nation governance, and provide humanitarian assistance to the local population.
- **Humanitarian Assistance** is focused on aid intended to save lives, alleviate suffering, and maintain human dignity during and after conflict, as well as to prevent and strengthen preparedness for such crises.



Iraqi security forces fire a BM-21 Grad near Rawa, Iraq. (U.S. Army photo)

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report is issued pursuant to sections 2, 4, and 8L of the Inspector General Act of 1978, which requires the Lead Inspector General (IG) to provide a quarterly report to Congress on overseas contingency operations. The Department of Defense IG is the designated Lead IG for Operation Inherent Resolve (OIR) and Operation Pacific Eagle-Philippines (OPE-P). The Department of State IG is the Associate Lead IG for OIR and OPE-P. The U.S. Agency for International Development IG also participates in oversight for both operations, and other partner oversight agencies contribute to that oversight. The methodology for obtaining information for the reports on both operations is contained in Appendix A.

This report covers events and U.S. Government efforts pertaining to two separate overseas contingency operations: Operation Inherent Resolve (OIR) and Operation Pacific Eagle-Philippines (OPE-P). The majority of the report addresses OIR, the overseas contingency operation to defeat the Islamic State in Iraq and Syria (ISIS). The report also discusses OPE-P, the overseas contingency operation announced on September 1, 2017, to defeat ISIS and other violent extremists in that Southeast Asian country. Coverage of OIR begins on p 17. Coverage of OPE-P begins on p 97.

OPERATION INHERENT RESOLVE

ISIS incurred significant defeats in Syria and Iraq this quarter, as its fighters lost control of Raqqah—its self-proclaimed capital in Syria—and the desert towns of Iraq’s Anbar province.¹ The U.S.-backed Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) declared Raqqah liberated in October, and Iraqi Prime Minister Haider al Abadi declared victory over ISIS in Iraq on December 9. However, pockets of ISIS resistance remained.² As ISIS continued to lose territory, the U.S. military continued to shift focus from advising and assisting local security forces in combat operations toward training hold forces capable of maintaining security in newly liberated territory.³

Nevertheless, developments in both countries complicated counter-ISIS efforts. The September 25, 2017, referendum on Kurdish independence diverted attention from the fight against ISIS.⁴ Syria’s ongoing civil war continued to complicate efforts to defeat ISIS, as multiple forces with competing alliances and agendas converged on an increasingly crowded battlefield. U.S. officials warned that while ISIS has suffered territorial defeats, it would likely continue to operate as an insurgency.⁵

Security

IN IRAQ

ISIS was largely defeated in Iraq’s western desert this quarter. ISIS launched a series of high-profile bombings.⁶ U.S. officials also warned that several issues could undermine the Iraqi government’s stability, such as ongoing tension between the Kurds and Iraq’s central government following the Kurds’ independence referendum, and Iran’s continuing effort to exert its influence in Iraq through elements of Iraq’s Shia-dominated Popular Mobilization

As ISIS continued to lose territory, the U.S. military continued to shift its focus away from advising and assisting local security forces in combat operations toward efforts to train them to act as hold forces capable of maintaining security in newly liberated territory.

SELECTED KEY EVENTS, 10/1/2017–12/31/2017

IRAQ

OCTOBER 15

The ISF moved north to retake disputed territory held by the Kurdish Peshmerga; by November, the ISF controlled all disputed territory

OCTOBER 31

Prime Minister Abadi said the central government would begin paying Peshmerga salaries
The ISF took control of border crossing between Turkey and the Iraqi Kurdistan Region, one of several measures taken against Kurds following the September 2017 independence referendum

NOVEMBER 21, 27

At least 47 people were killed, including 11 ISF personnel, in 2 separate bombings in Tuz Khurmatu and Baghdad

OCTOBER 25

The Kurdistan Regional Government stated that it will suspended the results of the September 2017 Kurdish independence referendum

NOVEMBER 20

Iraq’s Supreme Court ruled that the September 2017 Kurdish independence referendum unconstitutional

DECEMBER 9

Prime Minister Abadi declared ISIS defeated in Iraq after the group was routed from remaining strongholds in the Jazirah Desert, Rawah, and Hawija

Forces (PMF), militia units nominally under the central government’s control that fought alongside the ISF in battles against ISIS.⁷

Shortly after the September 2017 Kurdish independence referendum, Prime Minister Abadi ordered the ISF to take control of territory in northern Iraq that had been under de facto Kurdish control since 2014 (or earlier), but claimed by Iraq’s central government.⁸ In early October, as Iraqi forces moved north, most Kurdish Peshmerga withdrew to areas within the Iraqi Kurdistan Region (IKR), but some Peshmerga stayed in disputed areas and fought.⁹

Iran, meanwhile, continued to exert significant influence over some Shia PMF units.¹⁰ While the PMF is formally under the control of Prime Minister Abadi, some of the most powerful Shia PMF militias are allied with Iran’s Revolutionary Guards Corps—Quds Force.¹¹ This quarter, some PMF leaders threatened the U.S. military over President Trump’s announcement that the U.S. Government would recognize Jerusalem as Israel’s capital.¹² In response, U.S. officials warned that they would hold Iran responsible for any attacks carried out by Iranian-backed PMF against U.S. troops in Iraq.¹³ Amid these political tensions, several Shia PMF leaders appeared to position themselves to run in Iraq’s upcoming parliamentary elections, scheduled for May 12, 2018, by calling on militia members to take orders from Prime Minister Abadi and to withdraw from Iraqi cities under their control.¹⁴ The political maneuvering increased the divides among Iraq’s Shia, as several prominent Shia leaders opposed PMF participation in elections.¹⁵

News outlets continued to cover civilian casualties in Iraq. Some media reports published evidence that civilian deaths were significantly higher than officially acknowledged by the Coalition.¹⁶ The DoD acknowledged that the limited presence of Coalition personnel on the ground and the DoD’s casualty assessment procedures may have contributed to the DoD’s

SYRIA

OCTOBER 20

The U.S. military announced the liberation of Raqqah, self-declared capital of the ISIS “caliphate”

NOVEMBER 19

Aided by Iranian-backed militias, Syrian regime forces ousted ISIS from al Bukamal, a town considered key in the fight against ISIS

DECEMBER 3

CIA Director Mike Pompeo warns Iran that the United States would hold it accountable for pro-Syrian regime attacks on U.S. troops

DECEMBER 14

Two U.S. military aircraft intercepted two Russian airplanes flying over Syria after the planes cross into airspace patrolled by U.S. aircraft

NOVEMBER 3

The Syrian regime claimed to have liberated Dayr az Zawr city from ISIS

NOVEMBER 20

ISIS fighters infiltrated the 55-kilometer zone surrounding the At Tanf garrison where U.S. and Coalition forces train vetted Syrian opposition forces

DECEMBER 11

Russian President Vladimir Putin declared victory over ISIS in Syria and announced a partial withdrawal of Russian troops



lower casualty counts. The DoD also noted that fighting in densely populated urban areas had increased the risk to civilians and maintained that it had undertaken extraordinary efforts to protect them.¹⁷

On the training front, the DoD reported that it had trained more than 127,500 ISF personnel during the campaign to defeat ISIS, but had little direct insight into the various forces' military capabilities, mainly because the U.S. military relied on Iraqi information and self-reporting to determine the skill and readiness of ISF troops.¹⁸ Despite these limitations, the DoD described the ISF in general as a “combat-ready force” and the elite Counter Terrorism Service (CTS) as capable of operating independently of Coalition support.¹⁹

IN SYRIA

In October, the U.S.-supported SDF drove ISIS out of Raqqah and into neighboring Dayr az Zawr province, one of the few remaining areas in Syria where ISIS held significant territory.²⁰ As in Iraq, the defeat of ISIS's physical caliphate in its last major stronghold in Syria prompted the U.S. military to begin the process of redirecting training to enable vetted Syrian opposition forces to hold and stabilize liberated territory. This quarter, U.S. military advisers trained 2,400 Syrian opposition members belonging to 3 vetted opposition groups.²¹

**ISF members
conduct security
operations during
training at
Camp Taji, Iraq.
(U.S. Army photo)**

According to the DoS, Iran has provided funding, arms, and training to support the Syrian regime, and promote its own regional influence and ability to supply the Lebanese Hezbollah.

In the wake of ISIS’s defeat in Raqqa, the White House announced “pending adjustments” to U.S. support for Syrian opposition groups. U.S. military support for the SDF has been a source of tension between the United States and Turkey, which views the Kurdish People’s Protection Units (YPG), the dominant force in the SDF, as a terrorist organization.²² In late January, Turkish forces and allied Syrian fighters invaded the Kurdish-held area of Afrin, increasing tensions further.²³

Amid these developments, Syrian regime and pro-regime forces operated in increasingly close proximity to Coalition forces, particularly in Dayr az Zawr province, as the various forces arrayed against ISIS moved against the organization from different sides.²⁴ The Coalition communicated with Russia multiple times using the de-confliction hotline, which was created to avoid overlapping military engagements and mishaps.²⁵ On several occasions this quarter, Russian aircraft engaged in maneuvers that the DoD said endangered Coalition aircraft.²⁶

Iran expanded its influence in Syria through its support of pro-regime forces, including Lebanese, Iraqi PMF, Afghan, and Pakistani militias.²⁷ While none of these forces took direct action against U.S. military personnel in Syria, their presence has increased the threat to U.S.-backed forces.²⁸ In October, as the SDF and the Syrian regime and pro-regime forces moved toward ISIS in separate offensives in Dayr az Zawr province, Coalition officials warned Syrian regime and pro-regime forces against attacking the SDF, stating that the U.S. military was prepared to defend it.²⁹

Syrian Civil War

The Syrian regime expanded its control over territory this quarter, and opposition forces—both moderate and jihadist—continued to weaken.³⁰ Despite local ceasefire agreements, violence escalated in the Damascus suburbs of Eastern Ghouta and near the Golan Heights.³¹ In parts of the southwestern de-escalation area, the ceasefire largely held as the United States engaged weekly with Russia and Jordan to maintain that agreement, according to the DoS.³²

On November 11, 2017, President Trump and Russian President Vladimir Putin discussed some components of a possible resolution of Syria’s civil war, such as maintaining open military channels of communication and to support de-escalation areas and ceasefire agreements.³³

However, negotiations in Astana, Kazakhstan, and Geneva, Switzerland, produced no concrete results this quarter. Important unresolved issues included Syrian Kurdish involvement in the negotiations and the opposition’s demand that Syrian President Bashar al Assad leave office.³⁴

According to the DoS, Iran has provided funding, arms, and training to support the Syrian regime, and promote its own regional influence and ability to supply the Lebanese Hezbollah.³⁵ The U.S. Government responded with economic sanctions on Iran’s Revolutionary Guard Corps.

Peshmerga soldiers listen to instructions during land navigation training at the Kurdistan Training Coordination Center near Erbil, Iraq. (U.S. Army photo)



Governance and Civil Society

IN IRAQ

Several developments affected DoS efforts on governance issues in Iraq: the referendum on Kurdish independence, upcoming national and provincial elections, and the presence of Shia PMF units in Sunni areas. As noted above, the referendum increased tensions between the Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG) and the Iraqi government. In addition to ordering the ISF to take control of disputed territory under the KRG's de facto control, the Iraqi government also closed the borders of the Kurdistan region and halted international flights to and from the regional capital, Erbil.³⁶

National elections were scheduled for May 2018. While some parliamentarians have demanded postponing the elections until more displaced persons can return home to vote, a majority were holding to the May date.³⁷ However, a provincial elections law had not passed and there was not a confirmed date for those elections. Further complicating matters, several provinces remained in political disarray because of corruption, mismanagement, or the replacement of unpopular leaders.³⁸

Some Shia PMF units posed a challenge to national reconciliation efforts. Sunnis in areas of northern and western Iraq do not support Shia militias and do not want them operating in majority-Sunni areas. While the government of Iraq plans to replace the PMF with local police trained as hold forces, the training process has been slow.³⁹

IN SYRIA

The U.S. Government continued to provide non-lethal aid to moderate armed opposition groups and civil society organizations in an effort to support moderate, representative local government institutions in opposition-controlled parts of Syria.⁴⁰ At the same time, the DoS acknowledged the geo-political tension and challenges related to the Syrian



Engineers attached to the Special Operations Joint Task Force-OIR erected a bridge over the Euphrates River in the Raqqah district, Syria. (Special Operations Joint Task Force-OIR photo)

Turkey, which has long fought efforts by the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK) to establish an autonomous region in southeast Turkey, remains deeply concerned about the relationship between the U.S. Government and the YPG, given Turkey's views of the YPG's links to the PKK.

Kurds' power in liberated areas. (The SDF, which is dominated by Kurds, controlled about one-fourth of Syria this quarter), including Raqqah province and other areas that are conservative, mostly Arab, and often suspicious of Kurds.⁴¹

Turkey, which has long fought efforts by the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK) to establish an autonomous region in southeast Turkey, remains deeply concerned about the relationship between the U.S. Government and the YPG, given Turkey's views of the YPG's links to the PKK. Both Turkey and the United States consider the PKK a terrorist organization. At the same time, the YPG has the support of the United States and the Coalition.

The DoS said it would not support entities controlled by the Democratic Union Party (PYD), the most powerful Kurdish political party in northern Syria, or the YPG, which is the armed wing the PYD.⁴² However, the PYD appeared to have gained significant political influence over a number of local councils. The U.S. Government supported the councils but also pushed for greater demographic representation and inclusiveness in the makeup of the councils.

Stabilization

IN IRAQ

Iraqi government efforts to stabilize liberated areas is a critical challenge. Stabilization work to remove explosive remnants of war and rubble, provide access to utilities and hospitals, provide basic services, allow residents return to their houses and open schools and markets is ongoing but difficult. More than 2.7 million Iraqis returned to their homes, including 1.4 million in 2017.⁴³ Despite this progress, about 2.6 million Iraqis remained displaced at the end of the reporting period.

The UN Development Programme (UNDP), through its Funding Facility for Stabilization (FFS), reported slow but steady progress toward stabilizing newly liberated areas, but in November 2017 announced a funding gap of nearly \$300 million.

Allowing residents return to West Mosul is a key initiative. As of the end of the quarter, the DoS reported that the UNDP had implemented more than 1,400 stabilization activities, with more than 520 projects underway in Mosul.⁴⁴ The UNDP enhanced its monitoring framework to oversee the growing number of FFS projects and to improve overall program operation. Increased staff has allowed more site visits to ensure the proper use of funds, and the UNDP increased third-party monitoring to manage large-scale cash transfers for work projects, especially in Mosul.⁴⁵

IN SYRIA

The United States and the Coalition supported stabilization efforts in Raqqah province and other areas in northern Syria. In Raqqah, this support included demining, humanitarian assistance, restoration of essential services, and support to local governing bodies and civil society entities.⁴⁶ The United States did not directly support stabilization activities in areas controlled by the Syrian regime or Russia. As of the end of the quarter, these areas included Dayr az Zawr province west of the Euphrates, which was liberated from ISIS during the quarter.

Some local government officials worked on an interim basis this quarter with the expectation that the local population would determine the future composition of the government after displaced persons return home.⁴⁷ Of the approximately 264,000 persons reportedly displaced from Raqqah, by the end of the quarter about 34,000 had returned.⁴⁸

Support to Mission

The U.S. Government continued to operate under continuing resolutions that fund most Federal agencies at approximately their FY 2017 levels while congressional negotiations on FY 2018 appropriations were ongoing.⁴⁹ The President's Budget for FY 2018 requested \$13 billion for OIR, including \$1.8 billion to train and equip partner forces in Iraq and Syria. The budget request would maintain the current U.S. force posture of 5,765 troops in these two countries.⁵⁰ The President's FY 2018 budget request for the DoS and USAID included \$5.6 billion for efforts to support counter-ISIS operations and stabilization in liberated areas.⁵¹ According to DoD officials, the absence of reliable funding under a continuing resolution limits contingency planning and negatively impacts the Coalition's ability to resource contracts, procure materiel, and support the Iraqi government's efforts to consolidate the gains made against ISIS.⁵²

The President's FY 2018 Budget did not include Foreign Military Financing (FMF) grant funds for Iraq. FMF has previously supported Iraq's purchase of U.S. military equipment. During the past two fiscal years, the DoS used FMF funds to support the ISF's acquisition of military equipment and materiel totaling \$3.8 billion for its fight against ISIS.⁵³

This quarter, the DoS acknowledged that some U.S.-provided military equipment sent to support the mission, including as many as nine M1 Abrams tanks, had fallen into the hands of Iranian-backed militias that fought against ISIS in Iraq.⁵⁴ The DoS pressed the Iraqi government to prioritize the return of defense articles provided by the United States as designated in the sale agreements.⁵⁵

As of the end of the quarter, the DoS reported that the UNDP had implemented more than 1,400 stabilization activities, with more than 520 projects underway in Mosul.

KEY CHALLENGES

This list is derived from Lead IG analysis of information from the DoD, DoS, USAID, UN, and other sources of data. Information on each challenge is included within the sections of the report.

SECURITY

- ISIS's transition to an insurgency compels the ISF to shift focus
- Russian involvement in Syria complicates Coalition efforts against ISIS
- Iraqi security institutions need to reestablish authority over quasi-official militias

GOVERNANCE AND CIVIL SOCIETY

In Iraq

- Relations between the Iraqi central government and the KRG need improvement
- Elements of the PMF pose a challenge to reconciliation

In Syria

- Town councils need to be representative, inclusive, and transparent
- The political and military influence of PKK-aligned Kurdish groups in northern Syria remains a significant concern to Turkey

STABILIZATION

In Iraq

- Stabilization faces security issues, as well as demining needs, extensive destruction, and funding limitations
- The United States has fully contributed its pledged \$150 million payment to the UNDP stabilization fund

In Syria

- Stabilization efforts suffer from lack of UN coordination and constructive relations with the host nation

SUPPORT TO MISSION

- Continuing resolution imposes limitations on the OIR campaign
- The Iraqi government is unable to fully account for U.S.-provided military materiel
- Kurdish independence referendum jeopardizes assistance to the Peshmerga

HUMANITARIAN ASSISTANCE

- Thousands of displaced Iraqis were forced to return to their places of origin
- Kurdish independence referendum impedes humanitarian responders in northern Iraq



Iraqi primary school students pose for a photo. (U.S. Army photo)

HUMANITARIAN ASSISTANCE

In Iraq

The humanitarian response in Iraq focused on providing assistance in and around Mosul and western Anbar province, as humanitarian organizations reached civilians in areas previously controlled by ISIS. Overall, the number of people returning to their places of origin increased, at the start of the quarter according to the International Organization on Migration (IOM). As of December 31, 2017, there were 2.6 million internally displaced persons (IDPs), down from 3.2 million. While the security situation improved in liberated areas, there were still concerns about the impact of IEDs and indirect fire from ISIS. There was also a significant decrease in humanitarian aid workers' ability to access areas in northern Iraq due to actions taken by the Iraqi government in the wake of the September 2017 Kurdish independence referendum. Forced evictions of IDPs from camps led humanitarian organizations to emphasize the importance of ensuring that an IDP's decision to return home must be voluntary.

In Syria

In Syria, humanitarian responders scaled up efforts in the northeast, providing assistance to an average of 330,000 people per month during the quarter. In Raqqah, aid workers provided assistance to both those who fled Raqqah and those who returned following the liberation of the city in October. Despite the SDF's liberation of the city, the UN and humanitarian agencies were not yet advocating for people to return due to security concerns and limited basic services. Meanwhile, continued fighting in Dayr az Zawr led

Continued fighting in Dayr az Zawr led to large-scale displacement from and within the province, and humanitarian responders scaled up activities to meet the needs of the IDPs arriving at nearby camps.

to large-scale displacement from and within the province, and humanitarian responders scaled up activities to meet the needs of the IDPs arriving at nearby camps. Conflict in the Eastern Ghouta region near Damascus limited humanitarian access to the region, and airstrikes carried out by the Syrian regime led to nearly 200 civilian deaths. Humanitarian aid delivered to the region did not cover the needs of the population, resulting in severe food crises for civilians.⁵⁶

LEAD IG OVERSIGHT ACTIVITIES IN OIR

Outreach and coordination continue to be important aspects of Lead IG's mission. Senior representatives of the Lead IG agencies traveled to Afghanistan, Kuwait, and Iraq in early November 2017 to meet with senior military, diplomatic, and development officials executing U.S. interagency strategy in OIR and Operation Freedom's Sentinel (OFS) in Afghanistan. This visit set some of the groundwork and allowed intensive preparation for the joint visit to these OCOs by the three IGs themselves in January 2018. The IGs also held high-level meetings with their oversight partners to coordinate oversight efforts and they participated in activities to share the Lead IG model with new audiences.

In January, just after the quarter ended, the Lead IG officials visited Iraq and Afghanistan to meet with the military commanders, DoS senior officials, and USAID officials to be briefed on the status of overseas contingency operations. The IGs sought to obtain a fuller understanding of the status of U.S. efforts in the region, to assess the whole-of-government approach to defeating ISIS, and to help develop oversight plans for overseas contingency operations. The delegation also met with OIG staff deployed to the region. The meetings were candid, productive, and comprehensive. The Lead IG will provide more details on this trip and the key issues that emerged in subsequent reporting.

During the quarter, the Lead IG agencies and their partner agencies released the following seven reports that related directly, or in part, to OIR:

- The DoD OIG conducted an audit to assess whether U.S. Central Command and U.S. Africa Command effectively provided oversight of counter-narcotics activities
- The DoD OIG issued a classified report on its audit of the Army's Emergency Management Program in Kuwait. The audit's objective was to determine whether the DoD established and maintained a comprehensive emergency management program for Army installations in Kuwait.
- The DoD OIG conducted an evaluation of U.S. military-occupied facilities at Al Udeid Air Base in Qatar to verify compliance with DoD health and safety policies and standards regarding indoor air quality, electrical systems, fire protection systems, and active and inactive fuel systems.
- USAID OIG reported on lessons-learned in Syria that could be applied to ongoing USAID operations in other parts of the world and to future humanitarian responses. The report documents these lessons and illustrates how USAID OIG oversight has informed USAID policies and processes and addressed programmatic vulnerabilities.

Table 1.

Oversight Reports Issued this Quarter

Lead IG Agency Reports	Release Date
DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE OFFICE OF INSPECTOR GENERAL	
Army's Emergency Management Program in Kuwait (DODIG-2018-019)	November 7, 2017
U.S. Military-Occupied Facilities Evaluation—Al Udeid Air Base, Qatar (DODIG-2018-049)	December 21, 2017
U.S. Central and U.S. Africa Commands' Oversight of Counternarcotics Activities (DODIG-2018-059)	December 26, 2017
U.S. AGENCY FOR INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT OFFICE OF INSPECTOR GENERAL	
Feature Report: Oversight In Challenging Environments: Lessons From The Syria Response	November 9, 2017
Partner Oversight Reports	
DEPARTMENT OF HOMELAND SECURITY OFFICE OF INSPECTOR GENERAL	
FAMS' Contribution to Aviation Transportation Security is Questionable (OIG 18-04)	October 24, 2017
DHS Needs a More Unified Approach to Immigration Enforcement and Administration (OIG-18-07)	October 30, 2017
FEMA and CBP Oversight of Operation Stonegarden Program Needs Improvement (OIG-18-13)	November 7, 2017

- The Department of Homeland Security (DHS) OIG assessed the Federal Air Marshal Service's contributions to the Transportation Security Administration's layered approach to security.
- The DHS OIG conducted an audit to determine whether the DHS fosters collaboration and unity of effort Department-wide to enforce and administer immigration policy.
- The DHS OIG performed an audit of Operation Stonegarden Grant Program funds to determine whether the Federal Emergency Management Agency and U.S. Customs and Border Protection have sufficient oversight of Operation Stonegarden grants to ensure the awarded funds are administered properly and spent effectively.

Table 1 lists the released reports by agency.

Lead IG Agencies and Partner Agencies Planned and Ongoing Projects

As of December 31, 2017, Lead IG agencies and their oversight partners had 52 ongoing and 33 planned oversight projects for OIR.

Investigations Activity

During this quarter, Lead IG investigations resulted seven contractor suspensions and debarments, the removal of two employees from Federal service, six personnel actions, eight other actions, and savings and recoveries of \$34,367.

For the quarter ending December 31, 2017, the Lead IG investigative agencies closed 15 cases, opened 8 cases, and coordinated on 74 open investigations involving OIR-related programs and operations. The OIR-related investigations involved allegations of procurement, grant, and other program fraud; theft and diversion of Government funds or equipment; trafficking-in-persons; and other offenses. In addition, the Fraud and Corruption Investigative Working Group conducted 17 fraud awareness briefings for 211 participants.

Hotline Activity

Each Lead IG agency maintains its own hotline to receive complaints and contacts 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; and abuse of authority for independent review. During this quarter, the central Lead IG hotline investigator received and coordinated numerous complaints, which resulted in the opening of 57 cases. The cases were referred within the DoD OIG and the Service IG entities.

OPERATION PACIFIC EAGLE-PHILIPPINES

Operation Pacific Eagle–Philippines (OPE-P) is a U.S. counterterrorism campaign to support the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) in its efforts to combat ISIS affiliates and other terrorist organizations.⁵⁷ OPE-P was designated as a contingency operation on September 1, 2017.⁵⁸

Operation Pacific Eagle–Philippines (OPE-P) is a U.S. counterterrorism campaign to support the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) in its efforts to combat ISIS affiliates and other terrorist organizations.

In May 2017, ISIS–Philippines (ISIS-P) attacked and occupied the city of Marawi, a provincial capital in southern Philippines, employing sophisticated weapons and tactics.⁵⁹ Months of heavy fighting devastated Marawi’s infrastructure, and fighting formally ended when the AFP expelled ISIS-P from the city on October 23.⁶⁰ However, U.S. and Philippine government officials stated that ISIS-P was attempting to regroup in other areas of the southern Philippines.⁶¹

As of the end of this quarter, OPE-P had not resulted in an increased U.S. military presence in the Philippines. However, U.S. special operations forces provided support to the AFP, such as logistical support; intelligence sharing; operational planning; and intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance.⁶² The objective of OPE-P is to help the AFP stabilize the area and prevent the southern Philippines from becoming a safe haven for terrorists.⁶³

This quarter, residents were not yet permitted to return to the areas of Marawi most severely damaged by the fighting, and many of those who were allowed to return found their homes destroyed. In total, approximately 354,000 residents from the city and neighboring villages were displaced by the conflict.⁶⁴ Most of USAID’s programming in the region was targeted care for and reintegration of IDPs.⁶⁵



Philippine Rangers who fought in the battle to liberate Marawi from Islamic State insurgents. (Stars and Stripes/Seth Robson photo)

Lead IG Oversight Activities in OPE-P

As of December 31, 2017, the DoD OIG had two oversight projects related to OPE-P. The planned project will evaluate U.S. and Coalition plans and efforts to train, advise, assist, and equip the AFP to develop its capability to defeat and deny safe haven to violent extremist organizations in the Philippines. The ongoing project is auditing the Philippines Operations Support Contract to determine whether U.S. Pacific Command (PACOM) and subordinate commands developed, reviewed, and validated requirements for the contract to ensure adequate provision of services.

METHODOLOGY

To fulfill the requirement to produce a quarterly report to Congress on OIR, the Lead IG agencies gather data and information from Federal agencies and open sources, including congressional testimonies, press conferences, academic analyses, and media reports. The source of information used in this report is provided in endnotes or notes to tables and figures. Except for Lead IG and oversight partner agency audits, inspections, evaluations, or investigations discussed in this report, the Lead IG has not independently verified and assessed all the data included in this report. The humanitarian assistance section is based on public UN documents and information provided by USAID and the DoS.





Airmen perform pre-flight checks on an F-15E Strike Eagle before a sortie in support of OIR. (U.S. Air Force Photo)

OPERATION INHERENT RESOLVE

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Iraqi students run to greet Iraqi Counter-Terrorism Service members in Mosul Dam Village. (U.S. Army photo)



SECURITY

Iraq: Operations against ISIS

IRAQI PRIME MINISTER DECLARES VICTORY OVER ISIS IN IRAQ

On December 9, Prime Minister Abadi declared the defeat of ISIS in Iraq.¹ The announcement came days after the ISF concluded military operations against ISIS in the Jazirah Desert that spans Anbar, Salah ad Din, and Ninewa provinces. Iraq's Army, Counter Terrorism Forces, Tribal Mobilization Forces, and PMF conducted the desert battles. In October and November, the ISF cleared ISIS fighters from several urban and desert strongholds, including al Qaim and Rawah in Anbar province, the Rashad Air Base, and areas around Hawija in north-central Iraq.² Fighting in Hawija was particularly intense, and ISIS fighters set fire to oil wells in an effort to slow the Iraqi advance.³ Ultimately, approximately 1,000 ISIS fighters surrendered, which the U.S. commander, Lieutenant General Paul Funk, attributed to a lack of leadership, food, and pay.⁴ The DoD reported that some pockets of ISIS resistance remained in the mountains around Hawija.⁵

Civilian deaths attributed to terrorism dropped to 300 this quarter, the fewest since the UN began tracking the statistic in 2012.⁶ In addition, violence decreased in Baghdad and other major cities, where eyewitness accounts described increased security, a decline in armed incidents and bombings, and greater public confidence in the government's ability to maintain security.⁷ However, the threat from ISIS remained, as discussed in the next section.

The Iraqi government attributed the reduction in violence to an increased presence of security personnel. However, these measures created concerns. Fallujah residents, for

instance, complained that security measures made life difficult, and fed the impression that the Shia-dominated central government was discriminating against Sunnis.⁸ ISIS affiliates in Diyala province reportedly reorganized into a new insurgent group, a development that demonstrated continued antipathy of many Sunnis toward the central government and security forces.⁹ In other towns and cities, Sunni residents continued to express frustration with a lack of support both from the central government and from the Sunni politicians elected to represent them, according to media reports.¹⁰

The September 2017 referendum on Kurdish independence, which took place despite Iraqi and international objections, occurred in areas under formal and de facto Kurdish control—including disputed areas claimed by Iraq’s central government. In response, Prime Minister Abadi ordered the ISF to take control of disputed territory. By mid-month, Iraqi forces had seized oil fields and driven the Kurdish Peshmerga from almost all territory claimed by both sides, including areas the Peshmerga had seized after the rise of ISIS.¹¹ The ISF took control of the Mosul Dam, Kirkuk, most of the Kirkuk oil fields, and the towns and villages just south of the 2003 so-called Green Line separating the Iraqi Kurdistan Region from the rest of Iraq.¹²

The operation “negatively impacted Coalition efforts to defeat ISIS,” according to DoD officials, by reducing ISF troop availability for operations to defeat ISIS, diverting Coalition attention from the fight against ISIS, and hampering Coalition efforts to move military equipment and supplies to partner forces in Iraq and Syria.¹³ While the DoD stated that this repositioning did not ultimately affect OIR operations, it resulted in diversions of troops. For example, units from the elite CTS were sent to monitor the Green Line instead of resting and refitting or working to counter ISIS sleeper cells.¹⁴ Senior U.S. Government officials spent time mediating an end to the dispute between Iraqi and Kurdish officials instead of planning operations against ISIS, although planning of operations continued.¹⁵

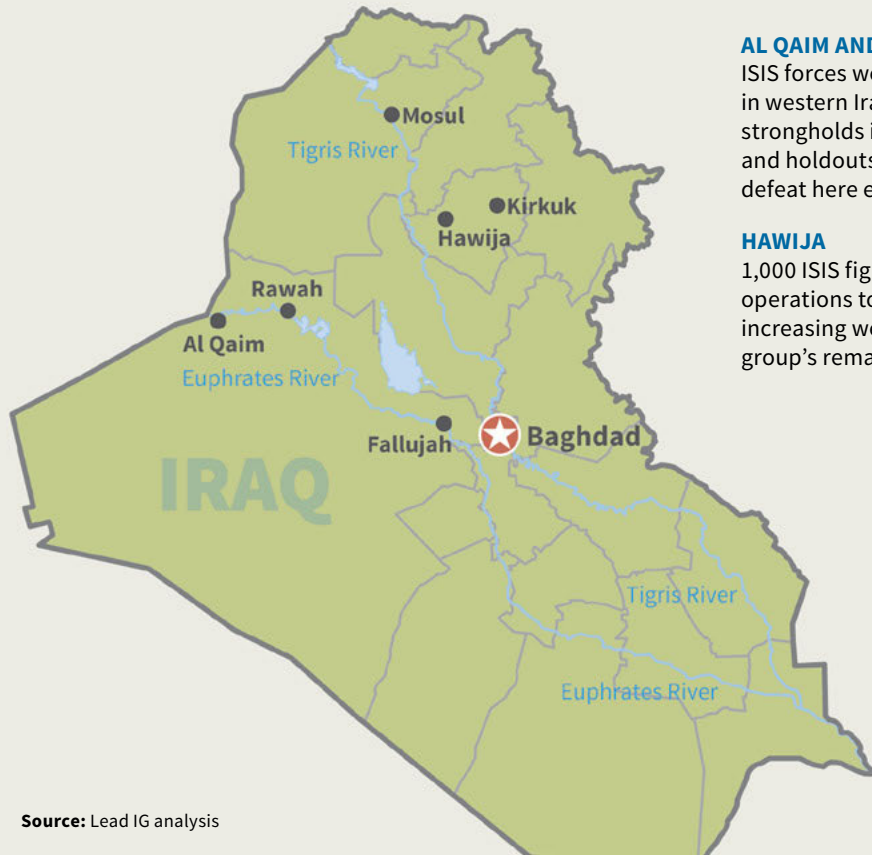
For more information on the impact of the Kurdish independence referendum on Iraq’s central government and the Kurdistan Regional Government, see the section in Governance and Civil Society on page 38.

An ISIS Insurgency Remains a Threat

U.S. officials congratulated Iraq’s government on the declaration of the defeat of ISIS, but stressed that the organization remained a threat in Iraq and across the region.¹⁶ General Joseph Votel, Commander of U.S. Central Command (CENTCOM), predicted that ISIS would not disappear with the loss of its territory. “They will operate in smaller cells, they are very savvy and adaptable so we should expect that,” Votel said.¹⁷ Similarly, a U.S. military spokesperson noted that the Coalition “fully expect[s] them to go back to their insurgent roots.”¹⁸ The DoD reported that ISIS was likely using under-governed desert areas in Anbar province for training and for making and transporting weapons.¹⁹

Although ISIS was weakened, security in many areas of Iraq remained tenuous this quarter. In October alone, in Ninewa province, the ISF found and dismantled more than 880 IEDs, 3,500 mortars, 140 suicide vests, 15 IED factories, 143 rockets, 20 tunnels, and 23 rocket propelled grenades, according to the DoD.²⁰

IRAQ: AREAS OF U.S. AND COALITION MILITARY OPERATIONS



Source: Lead IG analysis

AL QAIM AND RAWAH

ISIS forces were defeated in these two cities in western Iraq, which were their final urban strongholds in the country. While ISIS pockets and holdouts remain throughout the country, the defeat here ended their territorial control in Iraq.

HAWIJA

1,000 ISIS fighters surrendered to the ISF during operations to retake Hawija, highlighting the increasing weakness and low morale among the group's remaining cadres.

KIRKUK

Iraqi government forces retook Kirkuk from the Kurdish Peshmerga in the aftermath of the Kurdish independence referendum in September.

Meanwhile, ISIS supporters and sleeper cells continued to be active across the country. Based on analysis of local reporting this quarter, at least 170 ISF personnel were killed and 129 were injured in areas officially liberated from ISIS.²¹ At the beginning of October, an IED killed one U.S. soldier in Salah ad Din province.²² Along with low-level violence, ISIS also conducted a series of larger-scale complex attacks this quarter. On November 5, suicide bombers attacked Shia mosques in Kirkuk, and while ISIS did not officially claim responsibility for the attacks, Iraqi security sources identified the bombers as two foreign fighters.²³ On November 21, a car bombing in a predominantly Shia area of Salah ad Din province killed at least 36 people, including 11 ISF personnel.²⁴ At the end of November, 11 people died in a bombing in Baghdad. ISIS officially claimed responsibility for the attack.²⁵ The DoD reported that 10 people were killed in an ISIS suicide attack at a café in Hit in Anbar province.²⁶

The Popular Mobilization Forces and Iranian Influence in Iraq

Iran continued to exert influence in Iraq through its relationships with some Shia militias belonging to the PMF. The PMF is composed of dozens of militias, including some populated by Sunnis or members of other Iraqi minorities. The largest and most powerful PMF units are Shia militias, several of which are aligned with Iran.²⁷ While all PMF militias are nominally

In December, CIA Director Mike Pompeo revealed that he had sent a letter to Soleimani warning him that the United States would hold Iran responsible for attacks on U.S. troops in Iraq carried out by Iranian proxies.

under the control of Prime Minister Abadi, those aligned with Iran cooperate with Iran's Revolutionary Guards Corps—Quds Force, whose commander, Qassem Soleimani, has been photographed in Iraq meeting with Shia PMF leaders.²⁸ PMF units operating outside official Iraqi government channels pose a challenge to Iraqi government authority.²⁹

This quarter, Shia PMF participated in ISF advances against ISIS strongholds in western Anbar province, helping to defeat the organization in al Qaim and Rawah. However, U.S. officials raised concerns about some of the militias' actions. In December, CIA Director Mike Pompeo revealed that he had sent a letter to Soleimani warning him that the United States would hold Iran responsible for attacks on U.S. troops in Iraq carried out by Iranian proxies.³⁰ Days later, media outlets reported that an Iranian-backed PMF, Harakat Hezbollah al Nujaba, had declared U.S. forces in Iraq a fair target following President Trump's announcement that the U.S. Government would recognize Jerusalem as the capital of Israel.³¹ The DoD reported that part of its mission to build the capacity of the ISF was intended to help them counter destabilizing external influences in Iraq, such as Iran. A key challenge remained integrating the PMF into Iraq's official security forces.³²

Civilian Casualties in Iraq

The media reported on evidence that civilian deaths from Coalition fire were likely much higher than the number acknowledged by the Coalition. In November, the New York Times Magazine published an analysis of 103 airstrikes, mainly around Mosul and other areas of northern Iraq controlled by ISIS, and determined that 1 of every 5 Coalition airstrikes had killed civilians—far higher than the ratio of 1 in every 157 airstrikes carried out across Iraq claimed by the Coalition.³³ The researchers also found that strike logs maintained by the Coalition did not comport with Coalition footage of the strikes.³⁴ In a December investigative report based on conversations with healthcare and mortuary workers in Mosul, an Associated Press story estimated that as many as 3,200 civilians had been killed by both Coalition and Iraqi airstrikes and artillery fire during battles to liberate the city from ISIS.³⁵ The Associated Press report did not provide a breakdown of civilian deaths attributed to the Coalition and those attributed to the ISF.³⁶

In response to these reports, the DoD attributed the disparity in civilian casualty numbers to differences in accounting methods and procedures, a lack of Coalition personnel available to visit airstrike locations, and a shift in the campaign to defeat ISIS to operations in densely populated urban areas.³⁷ The DoD said that when it had corroborating evidence that made an allegation credible, it tried to send personnel to an airstrike site to make a final assessment. However, a lack of personnel often delayed site visits, and evidence collected weeks or months after an alleged strike was difficult to assess.³⁸ The DoD reported that it has trained 30 additional people to analyze allegations of civilian casualties.³⁹

Iraq: Train, Advise, Assist, and Equip Mission

The U.S. military continued to provide training to multiple Iraqi forces, but it largely ceased advise and assist operations with Iraqi combat units.⁴⁰ With ISIS no longer in control of territory, the U.S. training emphasis continued to shift from training combat forces to

training “hold” forces to help stabilize and secure territory liberated from ISIS. These hold forces included Federal Police, the Iraqi Army, and local police forces.⁴¹ However, the DoD reported that it lacked the ability to assess the capabilities of ISF “hold” forces after the forces leave the training venues because the DoD does not provide advise and assist support to these units.⁴²

In addition, the Coalition trained Army units in offensive, defensive, and stability operations. It also and trained police to support stability and security in an urban environment.⁴³

According to the DoD, it has trained more than 127,500 ISF personnel since January 2015, including 4,055 this quarter.⁴⁴ This total does not include the Iraqi Air Force, whose trainees are tracked separately.⁴⁵ The DoD stated that the number of CTS and local police trained increased substantially from previous quarters because the DoD revised its method of counting to include all types of training.⁴⁶

The DoD also reported that it had trained 1,838 Peshmerga this quarter.⁴⁷ The DoD halted stipends to Kurdish Regional Guard Brigades after a year-long agreement to fund the fighters expired in July 2017.⁴⁸ In October, Prime Minister Abadi indicated that Iraq’s central government would begin paying the Peshmerga’s salaries, but it did not do so during this quarter.⁴⁹ The DoD included a request for \$365 million for Peshmerga stipends in its 2018 budget request and reported that funds to pay Peshmerga forces were available “should permission be given to resume” such payments.⁵⁰ According to the DoD, the halt in funding did not affect the training programs.⁵¹

For a breakdown of Iraqi forces trained since January 2015, see Table 2.

Table 2.

Iraqi Security Forces Trained Since January 2015 and this Quarter

Forces	Number Trained Since Jan 2015	Number Trained First Quarter FY 2018
1. Army	~46,000	469
2. Air Force	Tracked by OSC-I	
3. Counter Terrorism Service	~14,800	442
4. Border Guards	~7,400	308
5. Tribal Forces	~11,000	—
6. Federal Police	~4,300	—
7. Local Police	~15,000	998
8. Emergency Response Unit	~3,000	—
9. Explosive Ordnance Disposal	Trained by Iraqis	
10. Peshmerga	~26,000	1,838
TOTAL	~127,500	4,055

Source: DoD, Response to Lead IG Request for Information, 1/5/2018.



A British army trainer gives instruction to Peshmerga soldiers during training at the Kurdistan Training Coordination Center, near Erbil, Iraq. (U.S. Army photo)

IRAQ'S COUNTER TERRORISM SERVICE TO RETURN TO ITS CORE MISSION

The U.S. military continued to draft plans to redirect the CTS away from its current use as a conventional infantry force and toward its original counterterrorism mission.⁵² The DoD reported that the United States had allocated \$221 million to the CTS for FYs 2017 and 2018, and that \$92 million had been obligated.⁵³

Since 2015, the Coalition has trained nearly 15,000 CTS members, including more than 400 trained this quarter.⁵⁴ However, the CTS suffered high casualties as it spearheaded the fight against ISIS, mainly as a strike force in operations to seize and clear territory. Iraq plans to replenish the CTS ranks by doubling the size of the force to 20,000 by 2020.⁵⁵

Shortly after its inception, the CTS faced allegations of abuse and political partisanship, particularly as it operates separately from the Iraqi Ministries of Defense and Interior and reports directly to the Prime Minister.⁵⁶ Two former contractors testified in November that they were paid hundreds of thousands of dollars by a senior CTS commander as part of a fraud scheme in 2011.⁵⁷

The CTS is also considered Iraq's most effective fighting force.⁵⁸ This quarter, the DoD reported that the CTS had demonstrated its ability to operate independently of Coalition support during operations outside of OIR to secure the boundary separating the Iraqi Kurdistan Region from the rest of Iraq.⁵⁹ Specifically, the CTS provided its own logistics, and command and control of eight battalions during the ISF standoff with the Kurdish Peshmerga.⁶⁰

CLARIFICATION ON IRAQI EMERGENCY RESPONSE FORCES TRAINED BY THE COALITION

In May 2017, graphic details of human rights abuses attributed to Iraq's Emergency Response Division (ERD), a force operating under the Iraqi Ministry of Interior, emerged

in media reports. Footage by an Iraqi journalist embedded with the ERD showed suspected ISIS members tortured and killed in late 2017. The reports prompted Prime Minister Abadi to announce an investigation into the incident and forced a spotlight on U.S. military training of Iraqi forces.

The DoD reported that U.S. military forces had not trained the ERD, but that the Italian Carabinieri, a partner in the U.S.-led Coalition, had trained at least 285 ERD members, from March to May 2016, roughly a year before the photos and video footage came to light.⁶¹ Instead, the DoD reported that the U.S. military had trained roughly 3,000 members of Iraq’s Emergency Response Unit—forces that are part of Iraq’s Federal Police but not associated with the ERD despite the similarity in name—since January 2015.⁶² Emergency Response Unit forces have not been implicated in human rights abuses.

The distinction is important because a U.S. law known as the “Leahy Law” prohibits the use of DoD funds to train, equip, or assist a unit of a foreign security force if the Secretary of Defense has credible evidence that the unit has committed a gross violation of human rights.⁶³ The U.S. Government includes acts such as torture and extrajudicial killing in its definition of gross human rights violations.⁶⁴

Much of the alleged abuse occurred against Iraqis suspected of being ISIS fighters. The DoD reported that the U.S. military did not detain Iraqi prisoners, but had passed information of alleged abuse of detainees held by the ISF to the Iraqi government.⁶⁵

ASSESSING IRAQI MILITARY CAPABILITIES

The DoD continued to rely on Iraqi information and self-reporting to assess the capability and readiness of the ISF, particularly at the tactical level. U.S. advise and assist teams were embedded only at the higher levels and often did not collect first-hand data, leading to a lack of independent information to assess Iraqi military capabilities.⁶⁶ The U.S. military reported that it tried to verify the accuracy of self-reporting through regular meetings with key Iraqi military leaders. The DoD reported there was often consensus on broad issues regarding Iraqi military preparedness and skill, but not enough data available to gauge the accuracy or reliability of details.⁶⁷

Despite the reliance on self-reporting, the DoD described the ISF as a “combat tested and combat ready force,” referring to the Iraqi forces’ ability to “destroy the physical caliphate” of ISIS in Iraq with Coalition support.⁶⁸ Further, the DoD said that the ISF’s reaction to an ISIS raid in the western desert illustrated its ability to execute a counter-attack using intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance, backed by limited fire support.⁶⁹ The DoD reported that as the ISF consolidated military gains, it was less reliant upon the Coalition and more capable of carrying out basic offensive missions with little Coalition support.⁷⁰ Finally, the DoD pointed to the ISF’s capture of disputed territory held by the Kurdish Peshmerga without U.S. support as an indication that the ISF has the ability to “plan, prepare, coordinate, and execute the staging, movement, maneuver, and sustainment of multiple division-sized forces across multiple ministries.”⁷¹ However, this assessment was undercut by media reports that the Peshmerga offered little resistance to the ISF advance.⁷²

The DoD described the ISF as a “combat tested and combat ready force,” referring to the Iraqi forces’ ability to “destroy the physical caliphate” of ISIS in Iraq with Coalition support.

At the same time, the DoD reported that these capabilities did not mean that “all the issues identified during major combat operations had been rectified” or that the Iraqi government had addressed alleged systemic problems, such as corruption, poor discipline, and promotions based on politics rather than merit.⁷³ Additionally, the ISF still needed to establish a strong non-commissioned officer corps and training institutions to generate forces necessary to confront resurgent ISIS militants or other extremists.⁷⁴ The DoD mission in Iraq will address these systemic issues going forward.⁷⁵

IRAQI MILITARY CASUALTIES

The DoD reported that the Iraqi government had not provided data on Iraqi military casualties to U.S. or Coalition officials.⁷⁶ However, according to local Iraqi reporting, 56 of the more than 170 Iraqi security personnel who died in combat and clearing operations this quarter belonged to the PMF. Iraqi police forces, including the Federal Police and local police, lost 47 officers and the Iraqi Army lost 35.⁷⁷ Operations in Ninewa province had the greatest number of casualties, followed by the provinces of Salah ad Din, Baghdad, and Kirkuk.⁷⁸

Syria: Operations against ISIS

U.S.-BACKED SYRIAN DEMOCRATIC FORCES LIBERATE RAQQAH FROM ISIS

The SDF liberated Raqqah from ISIS in mid-October and continued its military campaign against ISIS in neighboring Dayr az Zawr province, one of the remaining areas in Syria where ISIS held significant territory.⁷⁹ SDF fighters redeployed there, in close proximity to areas where Russian and Syrian forces and pro-Syrian regime militias were also fighting ISIS.⁸⁰

Following Raqqah’s liberation, Turkey stepped up its demands for the United States to stop arming the YPG.⁸¹ The White House subsequently announced “pending adjustments to the military support provided to our partners on the ground in Syria.”⁸² Defense Secretary Mattis said he expected U.S. support for the SDF to focus on holding territory liberated from ISIS rather than providing weapons to the group. He also said that the U.S. Government would stop arming the YPG.⁸³

The DoD reported that weapons and equipment were divested to the YPG this quarter.⁸⁴ Meanwhile, the SDF said that there had been no change in their relationship with the United States and that changes to weapons deliveries were a consequence of their victories against ISIS.⁸⁵ Syrian Kurdish officials reiterated their interest in having American engagement in Syria continue, and warned that a reduction in U.S. support could allow ISIS to regain strength.⁸⁶

The arming of the YPG angered Turkey, a U.S. ally that views the YPG as a terrorist organization because of its ties to the PKK.⁸⁷ Following the liberation of Raqqah, some Kurdish fighters within the SDF celebrated victory by raising a banner of jailed PKK leader Abdullah Ocalan and credited Ocalan for providing the “ideological power” that enabled them to capture the ISIS stronghold.⁸⁸ The DoD reported that it acknowledged

SYRIA: AREAS OF U.S. AND COALITION MILITARY OPERATIONS

AT TANF

Coalition forces remain based at At Tanf working with the vetted Syrian opposition group Mughawir al Thawra (MaT). This quarter, MaT and Coalition troops intercepted ISIS fighters attempting to escape from eastern Syria through the 55-km de-confliction zone around At Tanf.

AL QARYTAYN

ISIS fighters infiltrated behind Syrian regime lines and seized this town in central Syria for several weeks. While they were driven out again, they massacred hundreds.

RAQQAH

ISIS was finally pushed out of Raqqah, their self-proclaimed capital, this quarter, after months of brutal fighting. The city was badly damaged, and many parts remain uninhabitable.

NOTE: The United States and Coalition are not involved in the civil war. Combat between Syrian regime forces and their allies against opposition fighters and ISIS occurs throughout Syria.



Source: Lead IG analysis

Turkey's concerns, calling its fears "legitimate," and described U.S. military support for the SDF as "measured" and "transparent" to ensure that all parties remained focused on the campaign against ISIS.⁸⁹

Turkey deployed approximately 2,500 troops to northern Syria in summer of 2016 to prevent the YPG from expanding the areas under its control. Just after the quarter ended, Turkey launched an air and ground offensive against the YPG in northern Syria. The White House warned Turkey not to take its eye off the campaign against ISIS.⁹⁰

ISIS's defeat in Raqqah precipitated a small drawdown of U.S. forces in the region (in November, the U.S. military announced that a Marine artillery unit would rotate out of the region without a replacement) as well as discussion of the U.S. role in Syria following ISIS's defeat.⁹¹ Secretary Mattis said in November that the United States would maintain some engagement in Syria and not "just walk away and let ISIS 2.0 pop back around."⁹²

Russia and Syria maintained that U.S. forces must leave Syria with the defeat of ISIS.⁹³ While no direct action against U.S. or Coalition forces was taken by Syrian regime or pro-regime forces, both Iranian and Syrian regime officials escalated rhetoric directed at the United States and the SDF. In November, an adviser to Iran's Supreme Leader asserted that the Syrian Army planned to "liberate" Raqqah from the SDF.⁹⁴ At the end of December, Assad stated his opposition to the U.S. military presence in Syria and referred to the SDF as "traitors" for working with the United States.⁹⁵ The DoD reiterated that the



Raqqah Internal Security Force students prepare to clear an area during urban movement drills for Quick Reaction Force training near Ayn Issa, Syria. (U.S. Army photo)

United States remained committed to the permanent defeat of ISIS in Iraq and Syria, and that following ISIS's territorial defeat, its role would shift to facilitating stabilization and political reconciliation efforts to ensure the enduring defeat of ISIS⁹⁶

ONGOING ISIS ACTIVITY IN SYRIA

Despite its defeat in Raqqah, ISIS continued to operate both as a conventional fighting force and as an insurgency against U.S.-backed forces and Syrian regime and pro-regime forces. In October, ISIS seized al Qaryatayn in Homs province from pro-regime forces, conducting dozens of reprisal killings before being driven out.⁹⁷ An ISIS attack temporarily pushed Syrian regime forces out of al Bukamal.⁹⁸ ISIS also launched a series of car bombs against the SDF and the Syrian regime, killing dozens of people in Dayr az Zawr, Homs, and Hassakeh provinces, as well as the Damascus suburbs.⁹⁹

As ISIS suffered defeats in eastern Syria, some units attempted to retreat south and west, toward the Coalition base at At Tanf. Coalition forces and a vetted Syrian opposition force twice prevented ISIS fighters from entering an exclusion zone surrounding the At Tanf garrison. They also cleared caves controlled by ISIS in the Hamad Desert.¹⁰⁰ A U.S. military official said that “despite the presence of Russian-backed, pro-Syrian regime forces in the area, [ISIS] still finds ways to move freely through regime lines and pose a threat” to U.S. forces.¹⁰¹ Additionally, ISIS fighters continued to resist in the town of Abu Hamam in eastern Syria and elsewhere on the eastern bank of the Euphrates River.¹⁰²

SYRIAN REGIME AND IRANIAN INFLUENCE ON THE COALITION'S CAMPAIGN TO DEFEAT ISIS

Syrian regime and pro-regime forces operated in increasingly close proximity to Coalition-backed forces this quarter as each side waged a separate campaign against ISIS.

Operations undertaken by pro-regime forces defeated ISIS in critical areas, including Mayadeen and al Bukamal in eastern Syria.¹⁰³ Iran backs many pro-regime forces, such as Hezbollah, which maintains 8,000 fighters in eastern Syria.¹⁰⁴ Iran also directed the activities of other foreign fighters in Syria, including Iraqi Shia militias, a division of Afghan fighters, and units of Pakistani fighters.¹⁰⁵ The DoD assessed that while Iranian-backed forces had taken over certain tactical responsibilities that would normally have been undertaken by the Syrian military, these forces either operated under regime control or fought to reestablish the Regime's control of all of Syria.¹⁰⁶

Iranian support for the Syrian regime remained a matter of concern to the U.S. Government.¹⁰⁷ However, U.S. forces stayed focused on defeating ISIS and stabilizing liberated territory.¹⁰⁸ While diplomatic agreements were reached between Russia and the United States to expel Iranian-backed militias from the de-escalation zone in southwest Syria, U.S. forces have not been deployed to this area to enforce the agreement.¹⁰⁹

RUSSIAN PRESENCE IN SYRIA AND ITS IMPACT ON OIR

Russia's presence in Syria continued to complicate Coalition operations against ISIS. While there were no examples of Russian or Coalition forces firing on each other this quarter, challenges continued in efforts to de-conflict air and ground operations. Moreover, Russia continued to call for U.S. troops to withdraw from Syria, even as it expanded its military presence at two Syrian bases.¹¹⁰ The DoD estimated that approximately 3,000-5,000 Russian military personnel and an unknown number of private Russian contractors fought alongside Syrian regime forces.¹¹¹ Russia also deployed military police to the city of Homs, establishing checkpoints and observation posts and contributing to a reduction of violence.¹¹²

United States and Russian officials communicated over the de-confliction hotline as many as 20 times per day, according to Coalition officials.¹¹³ However, Russian aircraft engaged in behavior that risked collision with Coalition aircraft, officials said. In December, in one of the most dramatic incidents, two U.S. airplanes stopped supporting operations against ISIS to intercept two Russian aircraft that had crossed into airspace patrolled by U.S. aircraft, almost colliding with one of them.¹¹⁴ According to the DoD, Russian aircraft have also flown through no-fly zones previously agreed to by Coalition and Russian representatives, increasing the risk of unintentionally firing on Coalition ground forces. Russian forces have also fired artillery into ISIS-held territory in close proximity to Coalition forces.¹¹⁵

In October, during offensives into ISIS territory, by both the SDF and the Syrian regime, Coalition officials warned Russia against attacking or colliding with the SDF, with a spokesperson stating that the U.S. military was "prepared to defend our partners if they are attacked, whether by ISIS fighters or by anyone else. We certainly don't want to come to that and we will continue to de-conflict with our Russian partners."¹¹⁶

In December, President Putin visited Syria, announcing victory over ISIS and Russian plans to partially withdraw forces while continuing to maintain Russian bases in Syria.¹¹⁷

By mid-December, U.S. military officials estimated that about 3 percent of Syria remained under ISIS control and that about 3,000 of the estimated 6,000 to 10,000 ISIS fighters still operating in Iraq and Syria remained in Syria's eastern desert.



A veteran SDF soldier teaches a group of recruits about improvised explosive devices in northern Syria. (U.S. Army photo)

Syria: Train, Advise, Assist, and Equip Mission

The DoD reported that about 2,000 U.S. troops were deployed in Syria this quarter to train, advise, assist, and equip vetted Syrian opposition forces, a four-fold increase over the roughly 500 personnel that officials had previously stated.¹¹⁸ The troops train, advise, and equip members of the SDF in northern Syria, as well as at least one vetted Syrian opposition group at the At Tanf garrison near the border with Jordan. Funds to support vetted Syrian opposition groups were also obligated for use at al Bab in northwest Syria.¹¹⁹

According to data provided by the DoD, U.S. and Coalition troops trained about 2,400 individuals belonging to 3 vetted Syrian opposition groups during FY 2017.¹²⁰ Since late 2016, the Coalition has trained more than 12,500 members of vetted Syrian opposition groups.¹²¹ Last quarter, the DoD reported that this total also included more than 11,000 members of the SDF.¹²²

TRAINING AND EQUIPPING THE SDF

The DoD reported that it continued to train members of the Syrian Arab Coalition, which is part of the SDF, but did not provide basic training to the Kurdish YPG because the YPG was an existing force whose fighters did not need the same level of training.¹²³ The DoD reported that the U.S. military continued to equip the SDF but had taken measures to track the transfer of equipment and materiel earmarked for the YPG—in particular, to try to ensure that materiel provided to the YPG is used for its intended purposes.¹²⁴

The DoD reported that it was in the process of training SDF troops to provide security and stability in areas liberated from ISIS rather than continuing to train them to fight on the front lines.¹²⁵ In addition, the SDF were beginning to train internal security forces, border security forces, and explosive hazard reduction specialists, and have drawn up plans to restructure their counter terrorism forces.¹²⁶ The DoD reported that the SDF trained more

A fighter belonging to the Maghawir al Thawra rinses dust off his hands after an early morning patrol of the countryside in southern Syria. (DoD photo)



than 3,000 members of the Raqqah Internal Security Force and worked with the Raqqah Civil Council to clear thousands of homemade bombs, remove rubble, and provide safety for returning civilians.¹²⁷

TRAINING AT AT TANF AND AL BAB

U.S. Special Forces and partner forces continued to train the Mughawir al Thawra (MaT), a vetted Syrian opposition group, at the At Tanf garrison.¹²⁸ However, this group, originally conceived as a force to fight ISIS, was confined to patrolling the 55-kilometer

■ IRAQI PRIME MINISTER ABADI DECLARES ISIS DEFEATED IN IRAQ

In December, Prime Minister Abadi announced victory over ISIS in Iraq following the completion of military operations against the terrorist group in the Iraqi desert around al Qaim. ISIS no longer occupied any Iraqi towns or cities and the ISF controlled the border with Syria, although ISIS maintained a presence in mountains around Mosul and in areas of Anbar province. As a result, Coalition airstrikes declined by more than 50 percent from August to October 2017. However, the DoD and Iraq analysts cautioned that ISIS has not been fully defeated and was still capable of operating as an insurgency.

■ KURDISH INDEPENDENCE REFERENDUM DIVERTS ATTENTION FROM OIR

U.S. military officials said the Kurdish referendum on independence had “negatively impacted Coalition efforts to defeat ISIS” and forced senior U.S. officials to focus on mediating an end to disputes between Iraq’s central government and the Kurdistan Regional Government.

■ ISIS DEFEATED IN RAQQAH

The city of Raqqah in Syria was liberated in October, leaving ISIS without its self-proclaimed capital and forcing its fighters into the desert and smaller towns and cities in Dayr az Zawr province. U.S. policy regarding the SDF and its dominant force, the YPG, remained unchanged. The Administration indicated that military support to the SDF, specifically the Kurdish YPG, would cease, but officials in the region stated that there had not been a major change in military supplies or training provided to the group.

“de-confliction zone” that surrounds the garrison, and providing screening to protect logistical convoys.¹²⁹ At least twice this quarter, MaT fighters confronted ISIS fighters who breached the zone perimeters, the DoD reported.¹³⁰ In 2017, about one dozen MaT fighters defected to the Syrian regime, but the DoD reported this quarter that there have been no further defections.¹³¹

It was not clear how many vetted Syrian opposition groups or their members were trained at al Bab. The DoD reported only that training was occurring there.¹³²

ASSESSING THE CAPABILITIES OF VETTED SYRIAN OPPOSITION

The DoD reported that it assesses vetted Syrian opposition groups based on their performance in ongoing operations to defeat ISIS, but that it does not use an established metric to determine performance.¹³³ The DoD said that it evaluated the vetted Syrian opposition groups in terms of readiness, capability, and capacity, based its assessments on interactions with the force leadership and the population in areas in which the opposition group operates.¹³⁴

The DoD reported that the SDF had shown more battlefield successes than any other vetted Syrian opposition force. It credited the force not only with liberating territory from ISIS’s control, but also with pushing ISIS from the Turkish border to prevent foreign fighters

Members of 5th Special Forces Group (A) conducting .50 cal weapons training during counter ISIS operations at At Tanf Garrison in southern Syria. (DoD photo)



A Raqqaqah Internal Security Force student learns electronic demolition procedures during an advanced improvised explosive device course in Qatari, Syria. (U.S. Army photo)



from using international crossings. The DoD reported that the SDF liberated an area the size of Vermont and New Hampshire and predicted that the SDF would clear ISIS from land east of the Euphrates River, effectively ending ISIS's physical caliphate in Syria.¹³⁵ According to the DoD, the SDF had demonstrated both offensive combat capabilities and the ability to hold terrain after it was liberated from ISIS.¹³⁶ The SDF have also borne the brunt of the casualties in the fight against ISIS.¹³⁷

KEY SECURITY CHALLENGES

■ ISIS'S TRANSITION TO AN INSURGENCY COMPELS THE ISF TO SHIFT FOCUS

ISIS continued to transition to an insurgency as it lost control over territory this quarter. From October 1 to December 31, there were at least 294 security incidents across Iraq attributable to ISIS, including bombings, shootings, arrests, and firefights.¹³⁸ ISIS's defeat led the ISF to redirect its focus from liberating territory to effectively holding liberated territory and executing a more traditional counter-terrorism effort.

■ RUSSIAN INVOLVEMENT IN SYRIA COMPLICATES COALITION EFFORTS AGAINST ISIS

Russia's engagement in Syria continued to complicate counter-ISIS operations. Russian planes continued to undertake dangerous maneuvers near American aircraft, and the close proximity of Russian military forces to Coalition forces increased the risk of unintentional exchanges of fire.¹³⁹ Additionally, Russia's leaders emphasized multiple times their belief that the war against ISIS was effectively over, and as a result, the United States and its allies should withdraw from Syrian territory.¹⁴⁰ This could suggest increasing efforts to diplomatically and militarily pressure Coalition forces to withdraw from Syria in the coming year.

■ IRAQI SECURITY INSTITUTIONS NEED TO REESTABLISH FULL AUTHORITY OVER QUASI-OFFICIAL MILITIAS

Some militias under nominal government control but largely operating outside official channels participated in the fight against ISIS. With ISIS territorially defeated, these militias have not demobilized or been fully incorporated into the formal security apparatus.¹⁴¹ The Iraqi government needs to either integrate these armed groups into the official security apparatus or disarm them, which could lead to confrontation and distract from counterinsurgency operations against ISIS.¹⁴²

By mid-December, U.S. military officials estimated that about 3 percent of Syria remained under ISIS control and that about 3,000 of the estimated 6,000 to 10,000 ISIS fighters still operating in Iraq and Syria remained in Syria's eastern desert.

ISIS Territory, Financing, and Control of Oil Infrastructure

By mid-December, U.S. military officials estimated that about 3 percent of Syria remained under ISIS control and that about 3,000 of the estimated 6,000 to 10,000 ISIS fighters still operating in Iraq and Syria remained in Syria's eastern desert.¹⁴³ ISIS strongholds in Syria included villages on the eastern side of the Euphrates River in Dayr az Zawr province, slivers of territory in Hassaka, Homs, Hama, and Daraa provinces, the Yarmouk Palestinian refugee camp in Damascus, near the Golan Heights, and in two Damascus suburbs.¹⁴⁴ In Iraq, ISIS retained control of pockets of territory in the Hamrin mountains around Hawija.¹⁴⁵ The ISF continued to conduct targeted raids against ISIS elements in areas surrounding Baghdad and Mosul.¹⁴⁶

With the loss of territory, ISIS also lost significant ability to generate revenue, particularly from oil. As a result of a combination of airstrikes and territorial losses, the U.S. military estimated that Coalition operations cut ISIS oil revenues by more than 90 percent, reducing revenues from oil to about \$4 million per month from a peak of \$50 million.¹⁴⁷ While ISIS was still able to generate a limited amount of revenue from oil in Syria, the DoD said that it expected that this revenue stream would decrease as ISIS continued to lose territory.¹⁴⁸

The DoS and the Department of the Treasury, as well as other Federal agencies, continued to work with partner governments to aid those governments' financial systems, strengthen anti-money laundering efforts, and designate people and entities that either are affiliated with ISIS or facilitate its activities.¹⁴⁹ For more on U.S. Government efforts to disrupt ISIS's finances, see Appendix C on page 113.

SYRIAN CIVIL WAR

The Syrian regime expanded its control over territory this quarter, and opposition forces—both moderate and jihadist—continued to weaken.¹⁵⁰ Despite local ceasefire agreements, there was some escalation in violence in the Damascus suburbs of Eastern Ghouta and near the Golan Heights.¹⁵¹ In parts of the southwest Syria de-escalation area, the ceasefire was largely holding as the United States engaged weekly with Russia and Jordan to maintain that agreement, according to the DoS.¹⁵²

Peace Talks

On November 11, 2017, Presidents Trump and Putin agreed on important components of a resolution to Syria's civil war. In particular, they confirmed their determination to defeat ISIS and agreed that the conflict in Syria required a political solution, to be forged through the Geneva peace process under UN Security Council Resolution 2254.¹⁵³ They agreed to maintain open military channels of communication and to support de-escalation areas and ceasefire agreements put in place to reduce violence, facilitate the delivery of humanitarian aid to civilians, and help set conditions for a political solution to the conflict.¹⁵⁴

However, ongoing negotiations produced no concrete results this quarter. In Geneva, talks were temporarily halted on December 15 when negotiators representing the Syrian regime left in protest over the opposition's demand that President Assad step down.¹⁵⁵ The next meeting under the Geneva process was scheduled for January.¹⁵⁶

Meanwhile, Russia, Turkey, and Iran held discussions as part of a separate negotiating track in Astana, Kazakhstan, on October 30-31 and December 21-22. These talks broke down over a disagreement between Turkey and Iran over the Iranian presence in northern Syria. Further talks among the parties, billed as a "Syrian national dialogue conference" committed to a united Syria, were scheduled for January 2018 in Sochi, Russia.¹⁵⁷ More Astana talks were planned for February 2018.¹⁵⁸ Hot-button issues, including the involvement of the Syrian Kurds in the negotiations and the opposition's demand that Assad depart, remained unresolved.¹⁵⁹

Russia

On December 11, President Putin said that "[a] considerable part of the Russian military contingent located in the Syrian Arab Republic is returning home... Conditions have been created for political settlement under the aegis of the UN."¹⁶⁰ Putin said that Russia would operate at Syria's Hmeymim air base on a "permanent basis."¹⁶¹ On December 29, Russia ratified a 49-year agreement to expand its naval base in Tartus, allowing it to keep up to 11 warships, including nuclear powered warships, there at any one time.¹⁶² Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty added "[w]ith IS in retreat and diplomats pressing ahead with efforts to forge a political solution, analysts say Russia is eager to make its position in Syria as strong as possible in order to wield influence on future developments."¹⁶³

Iran's Role in Syria

The U.S. Government remained concerned about Iran's role in Syria. In October, announcing the conclusions of the Administration's Iran policy review, President Trump said that Iran "has fueled vicious civil wars in Syria...supported the atrocities of Bashar al Assad's regime and condoned Assad's use of chemical weapons against helpless civilians."¹⁶⁴ Secretary of State Rex Tillerson repeatedly denounced Iran's activities in Syria as destabilizing, although in late October he noted that Iran had not been successful in liberating areas of Syria, particularly in comparison to Russia.¹⁶⁵ According to the DoS, Iran views its relationship with the Syrian regime as "a crucial route to supply weapons to Lebanese Hezbollah and as a key pillar in its regional influence."¹⁶⁶ Also, the DoS said that Iran "provides [Syria] arms, financing, and training, and funnels Iraqi, Afghan, and Pakistani Shia fighters into Syria to support the regime and has sent members of the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps-Quds Force (IRGC) to Syria as 'advisors,' many of whom have taken part in direct combat operations."¹⁶⁷

According to the DoD, while Iran and Iranian-backed forces in Syria operate independently of the Syrian military in terms of command and control, they usually closely coordinate their operations with Russian and regime forces. Underscoring the significance of Iran's presence in Syria, the Iranian Armed Forces Chief of Staff visited

Elements of the Turkish military entered northern Syria in October 2017, under the guise of establishing observation posts in Idlib province pursuant to the Astana peace process.

positions in Aleppo in mid-October. In briefings to reporters, U.S. officials asserted that as much as 80 percent of the Syrian regime’s combat manpower was provided by Iranian-backed groups.¹⁶⁸

The United States took two steps this quarter to counter Iran’s influence in Syria. First, the President imposed economic sanctions on Iran’s IRGC, in part for arming the Assad regime.¹⁶⁹ Second, the United States and Israel reached agreement on preventing Iranian advances in Syria, although the scope of that agreement remained unclear.¹⁷⁰ However, some observers found these steps lacking. For instance, House Intelligence Committee Chairman Devin Nunes (R-CA) said that he “did not see” a U.S. strategy for countering Iran in Syria.¹⁷¹ And the possibility of conflict in southern Syria near the Israeli-occupied Golan Heights remained high, as Syrian regime and pro-regimes forces backed by Iran advanced on moderate and jihadist rebels operating there, despite an agreement between the United States and Russia to require the Iranian-allied forces to leave Syria or stay away from the border with Israel. In response, Israel conducted air strikes against what were reported to be Iranian bases in Syria; Iran did not respond publicly to these strikes.¹⁷² The widespread unrest in Iran this quarter could also affect Iran’s role in Syria. Among other issues, protesters against Iran’s government expressed anger at the cost of Iran’s continued involvement in Syria.¹⁷³

The international community continued to be concerned about two other issues: possible conflict between Turkish and Kurdish forces in northern Syria and the ability to provide humanitarian assistance to civilians in de-confliction zones.¹⁷⁴ See the Humanitarian Assistance section for details on the latter topic, starting at page 55.

Elements of the Turkish military entered northern Syria in October 2017, under the guise of establishing observation posts in Idlib province pursuant to the Astana peace process. However, the placement of Turkish forces in Idlib appeared geared more toward sending a message to Kurds in Kurdish-controlled Afrin than promoting a de-escalation zone in Idlib. Turkish President Erdogan stated his intention for Turkish forces to “purge” both Afrin and nearby Manbij of “terrorists.” While no Coalition-partnered forces were present in Afrin, the Coalition supported the Manbij Military Council, which controlled that city. Turkey has also promoted the formation of the “National Army” in Syria to fight against the Assad regime, ISIS, and members of the PKK active in Syria. This force includes about 22,000 members of 30 sub-groups of the Free Syrian Army, making it one of Syria’s largest armed group.¹⁷⁵

A central actor in the ongoing fighting in Idlib province is the al Qaeda affiliate in Syria, Hayat Tahrir al-Sham (HTS).¹⁷⁶ While HTS officially split from al Qaeda in mid-2016, the United States continued to consider the group an al Qaeda affiliate and has occasionally launched airstrikes against it.¹⁷⁷ HTS has increasingly grown in strength throughout the civil war, and despite the current fighting, remains one of the largest and best organized recognized al Qaeda affiliates.¹⁷⁸ Al Qaeda has continuously changed its size and scope over the years but remains a significant terrorist threat. For more information about the global reach of al Qaeda, see the infographic on the following page.



Sham, but the U.S. Government continues to label it an al Qaeda affiliate. Since then, it has gained military strength and territory, particularly in Aleppo and Idlib provinces, and has remained focused on Syria's civil war rather than on external operations. In January 2017, the group merged with other Syrian jihadist organizations to form Hayat Tahrir al Sham, which consists of some 30,000 fighters, including an estimated 18,000 belonging to AQS. To counter AQS, the United States has carried out airstrikes and, for a time, aided rival Arab fighters and anti-extremist civil society groups in Syria, but has focused on fighting ISIS rather than AQS. As a result, the CNA report concluded AQS has not been defeated or dismantled; rather, it has emerged as "one of the most powerful fighting forces among the Syrian opposition."

AL QAEDA IN THE INDIAN SUBCONTINENT (AQIS)

Al Qaeda in the Indian Subcontinent (AQIS) was founded in 2014 as a conglomerate of groups operating in Afghanistan, Bangladesh, India, and Pakistan. However, the group may be "more about the appearance of expansion" in reaction to the AQ's split with ISIS than about actual expansion. AQ members are involved in AQIS's leadership and provide guidance to AQIS. The group's largest attack was a failed attempt to hijack a Pakistani warship in 2014. Otherwise, AQIS has mainly carried out low-level attacks since its formation, such as hit-and-run assassinations of scholars, bloggers, social activists, and authors. While AQIS goals align with AQ's, CNA described AQIS as the "weakest and least active" al Qaeda affiliate and said that it poses "little if any threat to the United States."

Note: Extent of al Qaeda's international presence is based on Lead IG analysis of CNA report.

AL QAEDA IN THE ISLAMIC MAGHREB (AQIM)

An outgrowth of Algerian Islamist rebel groups, AQIM is organized into independent "battalions," each consisting of several dozen fighters who operate in the Sahara and Sahel regions, including Algeria, Mali, and Mauritania. From 2008 to the present, AQIM primarily focused on attacking local security forces, but also bombed the United Nations building in Algiers and successfully carried out kidnappings and murders of foreign, mainly French, citizens. In March 2017, after years of shifting allegiances, several "battalions" unified under one Malian leader, while two small units pledged allegiance to ISIS. To confront this increased violence, the United States has worked to enable Mali, France, and others to disrupt and dismantle AQIM. While AQIM has largely been unable to hold territory, it has maintained an ability to conduct attacks on security forces and civilians throughout West Africa.

AL QAEDA IN THE ARABIAN PENINSULA (AQAP)

In 2009, AQ members operating in Saudi Arabia and Yemen merged to form al Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP). CNA characterized AQAP as the most prominent and dangerous AQ affiliate. It maintains close connections to AQ and to al Shebab. Since its founding, AQAP has orchestrated or been associated with several high-profile attacks in the west, including the 2009 attempted "underwear bombing" in the United States and the 2015 assault on the satirical magazine Charlie Hebdo in France. While the Saudi government has largely been able to prevent AQAP from operating in Saudi Arabia, Yemen's instability enabled AQAP to take hold and expand there, particularly after several key commanders escaped from prison in 2006. The escalation of Yemen's civil war in 2015 benefitted AQAP, which seized territory and gained strength in southern Yemen while Yemeni and Saudi forces concentrated on fighting the Houthi rebels. The United States conducted an aggressive drone operation against AQAP, but the war in Yemen forced it to suspend counterterrorism cooperation with the Yemeni military and increased the difficulty of targeting militants.

HARAKAT AL SHEBAB AL MUJAHIDEEN (AL SHEBAB)

Harakat al Shebab al Mujahideen (al Shebab) is AQ's largest official affiliate in East Africa, operating primarily in Somalia while also conducting operations in neighboring states. Al Shebab emerged during the civil wars in Somalia and gained prominence after the Ethiopian invasion of Somalia in 2006, when it successfully seized vast areas of the country. In 2008, it officially pledged allegiance to AQ, and was recognized by AQ leadership in 2012. Today, it maintains de facto control of parts of southern Somalia. In 2013, al Shebab attacked the Westgate Mall in Nairobi, Kenya, killing at least 67 people. The United States countered al Shebab with airstrikes and special operations support to Somali forces. However, CNA concluded that U.S. and international efforts have only partially disrupted al Shebab, which continues to conduct attacks and hold territory in Somalia.

GOVERNANCE AND CIVIL SOCIETY

In Iraq

Tensions between the KRG and Iraq's central government escalated as a result of the September 2017 Kurdish independence referendum.¹⁷⁹ According to the DoS, voters included not just residents of the Iraqi Kurdistan Region, recognized as semi-autonomous by the Iraqi constitution, but also residents of disputed territories such as Kirkuk. Some of these territories came under de facto Kurdish control with the rise of ISIS in 2014, but had been claimed by Iraq's central government. Including residents of these territories in the referendum also raised the potential for strife among the different ethnic and religious groups in these areas. After the referendum, the ISF took control over Kirkuk and other disputed territory.¹⁸⁰ For more on this, see the Security section on page 18.

The Iraqi government took other steps to assert control over the Iraqi Kurdistan Region (IKR), including halting international flights to and from the region, actions the KRG described as "collective punishment."¹⁸¹ At the request of the Iraqi government, Iran closed its borders with the IKR, but reopened several crossings by the end of the quarter. The Turkish government threatened to stop importing Kurdish oil but did not implement any meaningful punitive measures.¹⁸²

Several weeks after the referendum, Masoud Barzani resigned as President of the KRG, and the KRG parliament voted to confer most of his powers on his nephew, KRG Prime Minister Nechirvan Barzani. Despite his resignation, Masoud Barzani remained the KRG's most powerful political figure due to his leadership of the Kurdish Democratic Party and his sway over some Peshmerga fighters.¹⁸³

Meanwhile, the sharing of oil revenues remained a point of contention between the KRG and the central government and exacerbated Kurds' frustration with the KRG's governance failures.¹⁸⁴ In December, six people were killed when Kurdish police cracked down on protests over unpaid civil service salaries and poor public services in several

Tensions between the KRG and Iraq's central government escalated as a result of the September 2017 Kurdish independence referendum.

KEY GOVERNANCE AND CIVIL SOCIETY DEVELOPMENTS IN IRAQ

■ RELATIONS BETWEEN THE KRG AND IRAQ'S CENTRAL GOVERNMENT FRAY AFTER KURDISH INDEPENDENCE REFERENDUM

After the September 2017 Kurdish independence referendum, Prime Minister Abadi ordered the ISF to take control of disputed territories, some of which had been under de facto control of the Kurdish Peshmerga since 2014. The Iraqi government also closed Kurdistan borders and stopped international flights to and from that region.

■ NATIONAL AND PROVINCIAL ELECTIONS ARE PLANNED FOR MAY

The Iraqi government announced plans to hold national and provincial elections on May 12, 2018, although significant questions remained concerning the ability to vote of millions of citizens who remained displaced from their homes. National and provincial governments will have to develop the means to ensure that those who remain displaced as of May can vote in their provinces. These complications provide additional challenges to ensuring safe, fair, and democratic elections.

■ IRAQ IMPROVES RELATIONS WITH SAUDI ARABIA

The two countries have opened a border crossing and resumed direct flights, reversing a 27-year status quo. They also created an Iraqi-Saudi Coordinating Committee to promote their improved relationship.

cities in the Kurdish region.¹⁸⁵ The KRG and the government of Iraq continued to argue over the management of oil revenues and the legality of subnational entities exporting oil. The KRG's loss of control over Kirkuk has reportedly reduced oil exports from KRG-controlled territory from approximately 550,000 barrels per day to approximately 250,000 barrels per day.¹⁸⁶

The DoS reported that despite its efforts to promote dialogue between Iraqi and Kurdish leaders to find a peaceful resolution to the conflict and support a united, federal, prosperous, and democratic Iraq, Kurdish and central government authorities were only engaged in working-level discussions as of the end of the reporting period.¹⁸⁷

In other developments, the DoS reported that while the PMF contributed meaningfully to Coalition efforts to defeat ISIS and were largely responsive to the Prime Minister's orders, some PMF units posed a serious challenge to national reconciliation efforts. The presence of these mainly Shia forces in newly liberated, mostly Sunni areas of Mosul, northern Iraq, and western Iraq was particularly problematic. The central government reportedly planned to replace non-local PMF units with other ISF units and to train local police as hold forces. However, the DoS anticipated that this replacement process would occur slowly because ISF forces would continue to engage in operations against ISIS and because training local hold forces will take time. Meanwhile, the central government continued efforts to exert control over all PMF units, a process that will require vetting and a reduction of their ranks.¹⁸⁸

As part of the reconciliation process, Prime Minister Abadi worked to try to bring the Sunni community and other minorities into the political process by, among other efforts, giving the Sunni governors of Anbar, Salah ad Din, and Ninewa provinces authority to coordinate provincial stabilization efforts and the return of internally displaced persons. According to the DoS, these moves to devolve power to the provinces have helped give minority communities a sense of empowerment and greater involvement in their own governance.¹⁸⁹ The international community—including USAID, the UN, and the U.S. Institute of Peace—continued efforts to help Iraqis with local reconciliation. However, significant challenges to national reconciliation persisted.¹⁹⁰

KEY GOVERNANCE AND CIVIL SOCIETY CHALLENGES IN IRAQ

■ RELATIONS BETWEEN THE IRAQI CENTRAL GOVERNMENT AND THE KRG NEED IMPROVEMENT

The deteriorated relations between the KRG and the Iraqi central government constituted an impediment to a unified, democratic, inclusive nation. The referendum highlighted rifts which their partnership against ISIS had concealed. Their cooperation on security measures was critical to success against ISIS, and is vital to continuing to improve security. The rift also puts further pressure on the oil cooperation on which the Iraqi and Kurdish economies rely. The referendum exacerbated already tense ethnic divisions when reconciliation and national unification are critical goals.

■ ELEMENTS OF THE PMF POSE A CHALLENGE TO RECONCILIATION

Particularly in northern Iraq, in majority Sunni areas, the presence of the largely Shia PMF remained problematic. Efforts to replace them with ISF or local forces were slowed by other demands and the need for training. In other developments, the DoS reported that while the PMF contributed meaningfully to Coalition efforts to defeat ISIS and were largely responsive to the Prime Minister's orders, some PMF units posed a serious challenge to national reconciliation efforts. The presence of these mainly Shia forces in newly liberated, mostly Sunni areas of Mosul, northern Iraq, and western Iraq was particularly problematic.

The Iraqi government also took steps to improve relations with Saudi Arabia, launching an Iraqi-Saudi Coordinating Committee in October and resuming direct flights for the first time since the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait in 1990.¹⁹¹

On the economic front, the DoS reported that Iraq had not completed a budget by the end of the reporting period.¹⁹² However, the International Monetary Fund noted “good progress” towards a 2018 budget in accordance with the conditions of its Stand-by Arrangement with the Iraqi government.¹⁹³

NATIONAL AND PROVINCIAL ELECTIONS SET FOR 2018

The Iraqi government announced plans to hold national and provincial elections on May 12, 2018. However, some leaders called for postponing the vote while millions of citizens remain displaced from their homes.¹⁹⁴ As the quarter closed some political leaders were still discussing postponing provincial elections until 2019. Some Sunni leaders wanted to delay both national and provincial elections, including Vice President Osama al Nujaifi, who said that it was “unreasonable” to hold provincial elections under such conditions.¹⁹⁵

As of early December, the International Organization on Migration estimated that 3 million Iraqis remained displaced. The Iraqi government continued this quarter to facilitate their return, although security remained a concern in some areas of the country. The high number of IDPs complicated election planning because of the logistical difficulty in ensuring that displaced people could vote.¹⁹⁶

Many provinces faced political disarray from corruption, mismanagement, and a lack of popularity of elected leaders. Provinces in northern and western Iraq have replaced their governor at least once since the last provincial election while governors in other provinces have been voted out of office by Iraq’s parliament.¹⁹⁷

Some Shia PMF units presented a further complicating factor for the elections. While an Iraqi executive decree prohibited a PMF from itself standing as a political party, the DoS reported that some PMF and their leaders could be reconstituting themselves as political parties to maintain power under a different mantle.¹⁹⁸ Some Shia PMF leaders called on militia members to take orders from Prime Minister Abadi and to withdraw from cities under their control in anticipation of the May parliamentary elections. Many PMF leaders also sought to publicly distance themselves from their militias.¹⁹⁹ The political roles of the PMF and their leaders sharpened the divides among Iraq’s Shia, as Shia cleric Muqtada al-Sadr, long critical of Iranian influence in Iraq, warned the PMF not to participate in national elections and Ayatollah Ali Sistani, Iraq’s foremost Shia religious leader, called on the PMF to avoid political activities.²⁰⁰

In Syria

Since the beginning of the civil war in Syria, the United States has provided more than \$875 million in non-lethal and stabilization assistance to the Syrian people, including more than \$200 million in 2017. The DoS reported that the United States provided non-lethal aid to moderate armed opposition groups and civil society organizations in an effort to

The Iraqi government announced plans to hold national and provincial elections on May 12, 2018. However, some leaders called for postponing the vote while millions of citizens remain displaced from their homes.

KEY GOVERNANCE AND CIVIL SOCIETY DEVELOPMENTS IN SYRIA

■ ELECTIONS HELD IN KURDISH-LED SYRIAN TERRITORIES

In December, elections were held for city, local, and district council assemblies in three areas under the control of the Kurdish-led Autonomous Administration. However, the DoS reported that in those areas, political freedom was suppressed or limited.

■ THE UNITED STATES PROVIDED OVER \$200 MILLION IN 2017 FOR SYRIAN CIVILIAN ASSISTANCE.

The United States provided more than \$200 million in non-lethal and stabilization assistance in 2017.

empower moderate, representative local government institutions in opposition-controlled areas of Syria.²⁰¹ The objectives were to enhance stability by supporting these moderate forces and civil society institutions and to form a bulwark against the regime and extremist groups, including a resurgence of ISIS. In working with these groups, and town councils in Raqqah, Tabqah, and elsewhere, the DoS stressed the need for them to be representative, inclusive, and transparent in the service of all populations, noting that ISIS could exploit the absence of credible and effective governance and return as an insurgent force.²⁰²

The DoS reported continuing concerns about the degree of Kurdish control of the councils and of large areas of Syrian territory in which the Kurds are an ethnic minority. As of November 2017, Kurds controlled roughly a quarter of Syria's territory, including areas with majority conservative Sunni Arab populations north of Raqqah and extending south and east toward lucrative oil fields in the east of the country. Kurdish control of Sunnis, combined with long standing tensions between Arabs and Kurds, could lead to discord and an opening for the return of ISIS.²⁰³

The affiliations of Syrian Kurds serving on local councils also created complications with neighboring Turkey, which has long opposed a Kurdish independence movement within its borders, and which remained concerned about an autonomous Kurdish region in northern Syria. The PYD appeared to be the dominant political force in areas under Kurdish control. The PYD's militia is the YPG, which Turkey considers a terrorist organization due to its association with the PKK. Turkey has long fought efforts by the PKK to establish autonomy in eastern Turkey. Both Turkey and the United States recognize the PKK as a terrorist organization. A PYD official has stated to Russian media that the organization would not disavow the PKK.²⁰⁴

KEY GOVERNANCE AND CIVIL SOCIETY CHALLENGES IN SYRIA

■ THE POLITICAL AND MILITARY INFLUENCE OF PKK-ALIGNED KURDISH GROUPS IN NORTHERN SYRIA REMAINS A SIGNIFICANT CONCERN TO TURKEY

Turkey continues to view YPG and PYD dominance of the military and political spheres, respectively, in northern Syria as an existential threat, given the reported ties between the two groups and the PKK, a U.S.-designated terrorist organization that has waged a violent insurgency within Turkey's borders for more than 30 years.

■ TOWN COUNCILS NEED TO BE REPRESENTATIVE, INCLUSIVE, AND TRANSPARENT

In areas such as Raqqah, which had a majority conservative, Sunni Arab population, the potential for domination by the Syrian Kurds caused the DoS to stress democratic values to ensure stability and acceptance by the population.

In December, the Kurdish-led “Autonomous Administration” held elections for city, local, and district council assemblies in Afrin and two other areas of Syria.²⁰⁵ The elections produced overwhelming results favoring a political coalition dominated by the PYD. The DoS has stated that it will not provide assistance to entities assessed to be controlled by the PYD or YPG. Furthermore, the DoS reported that political freedom was “suppressed” or “limited” in areas of Syria under PYD control and that the PYD used elections to secure its hold in some areas.²⁰⁶

STABILIZATION

In Iraq

During this quarter, the United States and the Coalition continued to support Iraqi-led efforts to stabilize communities liberated from ISIS’s control. According to the DoS, Prime Minister Abadi sought to empower local leaders to provide critical basic services and this de-centralized approach to stabilization sought to build confidence and trust in the central government so that Iraqis could “vote with their feet” and return home rather than staying in refugee camps.²⁰⁷ Over 2.7 million Iraqis have returned to their homes, including 1.4 million in 2017.²⁰⁸

As of the end of the quarter, the DoS reported that the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) had implemented over 1,400 stabilization activities, with more than 520 projects underway in Mosul. UNDP projects were underway in 23 cities in 5 provinces throughout the country. In Mosul, over 250 schools had been assessed, and water had been restored to 300,000 residents in eastern Mosul. However, the work in Mosul was just a beginning, especially in western Mosul, site of the worst destruction, where the damage has been described as “apocalyptic” with “entire districts in smoldering heaps of rubble.” Large-scale returns have been delayed by the IED contamination and lack of access to many neighborhoods. The 3-year occupation by and liberation from ISIS had devastating effects on the city’s health sector and infrastructure.²⁰⁹

The UNDP continued to work with the Iraqi government to prioritize near-term stabilization efforts throughout the country, focusing on restarting public services, including reopening schools, and stabilizing conditions to enable displaced Iraqis to return to their homes and begin the long process of rebuilding their lives. The UNDP reported that progress under the Funding Facility for Stabilization (FFS) has been slow but steady. Residents returning to Ramadi, Fallujah, Tikrit, and Qayara have access to water, electricity, and health services. Moreover, towns have reopened many local schools, and university campuses saw more activity. Anbar University, for example, held classes for 18,000 students.²¹⁰

The UNDP reported that progress was most visible in provinces liberated more than one year ago. Work there was shifting to the design and implementation of expanded stabilization projects, including major facilities to stimulate the economy and provide jobs for returning residents. This includes the restoration of bridges in Anbar province and

The Iraqi government announced plans to hold national and provincial elections on May 12, 2018. However, some leaders called for postponing the vote while millions of citizens remain displaced from their homes.



An Iraqi Counter-Terrorism Service member provides security for a school in Aski Mosul, Iraq. (U.S. Army photo)

upgrading the Tikrit Teaching Hospital, where five facilities were completed. Plans to design the main inpatient/outpatient facility were moving ahead.²¹¹

However, in early December 2017, Lise Grande, UNDP Resident Representative for Iraq, highlighted the enormous amount of work that needed to be done to stabilize areas liberated from ISIS. “Electricity grids need to be rehabilitated, waters systems repaired, rubble removed and schools and hospitals opened,” she said. “Three million Iraqis are still displaced.”

As of September 30, 2017, 24 donor nations had provided \$415.5 million to the FFS, of which the U.S. Government contributed \$115.3 million. In addition, the Ambassador, USAID and the DoS announced in July 2017 that the United States planned to give an additional \$150 million. In January 2018, the United States contributed \$75 million of the \$150 million pledge, which brought its total FFS contribution to \$190 million. The United States assured the Iraqi government that its FY 2018 contributions would be \$150 million, bringing the total U.S. contribution to \$265.3 million. During this quarter, Germany contributed \$94 million to the UNDP FFS program and the Iraq Crisis Response and Resilience Programme, raising Germany’s total contributions to UNDP programs in Iraq to \$263.2 million.²¹²

KEY STABILIZATION DEVELOPMENTS IN IRAQ

■ PROJECTS IMPROVE LIFE FOR RESIDENTS OF MOSUL, MAINLY IN THE EASTERN SECTION.

In Mosul, at the end of the quarter, 350 projects were being implemented or developed, 250 schools were assessed, and water had been restored to 300,000 residents in eastern Mosul. Western Mosul experienced the most extensive destruction and required more work.

■ RESIDENTS RETURNING TO THEIR HOMES BENEFIT FROM RE-CONNECTED SERVICES AND REOPENED SCHOOLS IN VARIOUS AREAS

Displaced persons returning to Ramadi, Fallujah, Tikrit, and Qayara have access to basic services, and reopening schools has been a priority for the government of Iraq.

Yet the UNDP faces a funding gap of \$300 million for the FFS program. In late December, the DoS urged its Coalition partners to help close the gap, particularly for west Mosul, where hundreds of thousands of residents remained displaced.²¹³ According to the DoS, the \$300 million goal would be within reach by the next Coalition ministerial meeting, planned for Kuwait City in February 2018.²¹⁴

During the first quarter of 2017, the UNDP implemented a monitoring framework to oversee the growing number of FFS projects and to improve overall program operation. The monitoring framework has grown to include 70 engineers and staff. Site visits increased to enable international staff to review FFS areas of operation. The UNDP also increased third-party monitoring to manage large-scale cash transfers for work projects, especially in Mosul.²¹⁵

The UNDP reported that given the limited funding at its disposal, it will need to be disciplined and strategic in supporting the Iraqi government and provincial priorities. According to the UNDP, a major challenge will be supporting underfunded expanded stabilization and housing programs. Community leaders must be actively engaged with provincial and municipal officials to understand funding priorities and ensure that diverse, minority communities do not feel that they are being ignored or discriminated against.²¹⁶

In January 2018, the International Organization for Migration reported that the number of Iraqis returning to their area of origin had surpassed the number of IDPs for the first time since December 2013.

Despite this, security for returnees remained a challenge in some liberated areas. The UNDP reported that locals were at times reluctant to return to areas because of concerns about the security forces, particularly in localities not under control of local police. This included Baiji, Sinjar, and much of the Ninewa Plains. The UNDP reported that it planned to avoid those areas where either the original residents do not accept the local security forces, or where there are suspicions of forced demographic changes.²¹⁷

According to the DoS, the \$300 million goal would be within reach by the next Coalition ministerial meeting, planned for Kuwait City in February 2018.

KEY STABILIZATION CHALLENGES IN IRAQ

■ STABILIZATION FACES SECURITY ISSUES, AS WELL AS DEMINING NEEDS, EXTENSIVE DESTRUCTION, AND FUNDING LIMITATIONS

West Mosul in particular suffered extreme devastation during the 3-year occupation by ISIS and the fight for its liberation. Immediate stabilization needs include the removal of extraordinary levels of unexploded ordnance, and repairs to the destruction of infrastructure, buildings, and services. Until demining and security needs can be met, residents will not be able to return in safety. The UNDP and the DoS reported the need for an additional \$300 million in contributions for the FFS program overall to address the scope of destruction and allow for the return of more than 3 million IDPs. However, the amount was subject to change as the UNDP and the Iraqi government conduct needs assessments of newly liberated areas and donors make additional contributions to the FFS.

■ THE UNITED STATES HAS NOT FULLY CONTRIBUTED ITS PLEDGED \$150 MILLION PAYMENT TO THE UNDP STABILIZATION FUND

The shortfall facing the UNDP's stabilization fund will require all donor nations to meet their pledges and maximize contributions. As one of the leaders in FFS funding, the United States needs to address its unfulfilled pledge.

DoS Undertakes Explosive Remnants of War Removal in Iraq and Syria

As ISIS lost territory in Iraq and Syria, it left behind thousands of sophisticated IEDs, mines, and booby traps—some hidden in everyday appliances such as vacuums and ovens to increase the likelihood of injury to civilians. Coalition bombs and artillery added to the danger: according to U.S. officials, Coalition munitions fired by the thousands onto battlegrounds in both countries have a failure rate of between 2 and 10 percent.²¹⁸

In addition to the unexploded remnants of war from the conflict with ISIS, there remain in Iraq an estimated 10 to 15 million landmines and other unexploded ordnance from multiple conflicts, including the 1980-1988 Iran-Iraq war, the 1990-1991 war with Kuwait, and the conflict that started with the 2003 U.S.-led invasion.

The presence of such a large number of explosive remnants of war in dense urban places such as Mosul and Raqqah makes demining difficult.²¹⁹ The sophistication and complexity of ISIS bombs intensifies the task. DoS officials reported that ISIS bomb makers used crush wires and passive infrared sensors to trigger an explosion, mechanisms that are delicate and difficult to detect.²²⁰

The DoS Office of Weapons Removal and Abatement oversees efforts to find and destroy unexploded ordnance in Iraq and Syria and implements a humanitarian mine action program designed to enable people to return home.²²¹ Sites earmarked for ordnance removal are prioritized based on the number of civilians present.²²² The DoS has operated demining programs in Iraq for more than a decade.²²³

In Iraq and Syria, the DoS has focused on restoring essential public services and infrastructure to facilitate stabilization instead of conducting the kind of broad clearing operations typically implemented in other countries. This is largely due to the pervasiveness and wide variety of the explosive remnants of war left behind in Syria and Iraq. Instead of clearing every structure in a neighborhood, demining experts identify key infrastructure, such as a hospital or water treatment plant, for immediate clearance.²²⁴

In Iraq, the DoS is working with the UNDP to build prioritized lists of key sites. In Syria, the DoS-led Syrian Transition Assistance and Response Team has compiled a list of sites in the northeastern cities of Manbij, Tabqah, and Raqqah, but some sites have been deemed too damaged by fighting to be salvageable.²²⁵ The amount of unexploded ordnance is high. The DoS reported that “basically, every single standing structure in Raqqah has an IED in it.”²²⁶

The operations are costly. The level of saturation and sophistication of the IEDs require highly specialized personnel.²²⁷ In Syria, DoS officials estimated demining costs to be more than \$50 per square meter. By comparison, the cost in Afghanistan, where the work is less complex and carried out by local personnel, is less than one dollar per square meter.²²⁸



In Syria

The United States does not support stabilization activities in areas controlled by the Assad regime. As of the end of the quarter, these areas included Dayr az Zawr province west of the Euphrates, which was largely liberated from ISIS during the quarter. The United States and the Coalition supported stabilization in Raqqah province and other areas in northern Syria, starting as soon as ISIS was defeated. In Raqqah this support included restoration of essential services such as water, education, media, and health services, and support to local governing bodies and civil society entities, following the necessary demining activities.²²⁹

Engineers erect a bridge that provides much-needed access to parts of Raqqah following the destruction to critical infrastructure caused by ISIS. (U.S. Army photo)

In light of the political and military situation in Syria, stabilization efforts suffered from the absence of a UN coordinator and a trusted national government partner. Unlike in Iraq, where the UNDP spearheaded these efforts and largely funded them through the FFS, the UN in Syria operated in Damascus, and was not available to support stabilization activities outside of areas controlled by the regime. In addition, the United States only provided assistance for stabilization in areas not under the Syrian regime's control. Instead

KEY STABILIZATION DEVELOPMENTS IN SYRIA

■ U.S. AND COALITION STABILIZATION EFFORTS BEGIN ONCE ISIS IS DEFEATED, BUT ONLY IN LIMITED AREAS

The liberation of Raqqah allowed the United States and the Coalition to start stabilization work, beginning with significant demining activities. However, the United States does not provide support for stabilization efforts in areas controlled by the Syrian regime.

KEY STABILIZATION CHALLENGES IN SYRIA

■ STABILIZATION EFFORTS SUFFER FROM LACK OF UN COORDINATION AND CONSTRUCTIVE RELATIONS WITH THE HOST NATION

Stabilization efforts suffered from the lack of a trusted host-nation partner and the absence of a UN stabilization coordinator. The key challenges to stabilization in Syria included the inability of humanitarian aid workers to get to areas where civilians are in need and the large numbers of IEDs, booby traps, mines, and unexploded ordnance.

of coordinating with a national partner, the U.S. Government worked with local and provincial actors in moderate, non-regime held areas.²³⁰

Some local officials serving in government councils were working on an interim basis with the expectation that the local population would determine the future composition of the government after large numbers of displaced persons were able to return home.²³¹ Of the approximately 264,000 persons reportedly displaced from Raqqa, by the end of the quarter about 34,000 had returned.²³²

SUPPORT TO MISSION

The Lead IG “support to mission” SOA concerns administrative, financial, logistical, and management activity to support the U.S. Government’s efforts to conduct military operations, empower host-nation governance, and provide humanitarian assistance to the local population. In this section, the Lead IG also reports on the status of funds allocated to support the mission.

Congress’s Continuing Resolution to Fund FY 2018 Impacts OIR

This quarter, the Federal government operated under a pair of continuing resolutions that funded most Federal agencies at their FY 2017 levels minus 0.6791 percent through January 19, 2018.²³³ OCO funds are exempt from this reduction. However, the DoD cannot use continuing resolution funding to start new programs, enter into multi-year contracts, or increase production rates. According to DoD officials, the absence of reliable funding under a continuing resolution limits contingency planning and negatively impacts the Coalition’s ability to resource contracts, procure materiel, and support the Iraqi government’s efforts to consolidate the gains made against ISIS.²³⁴

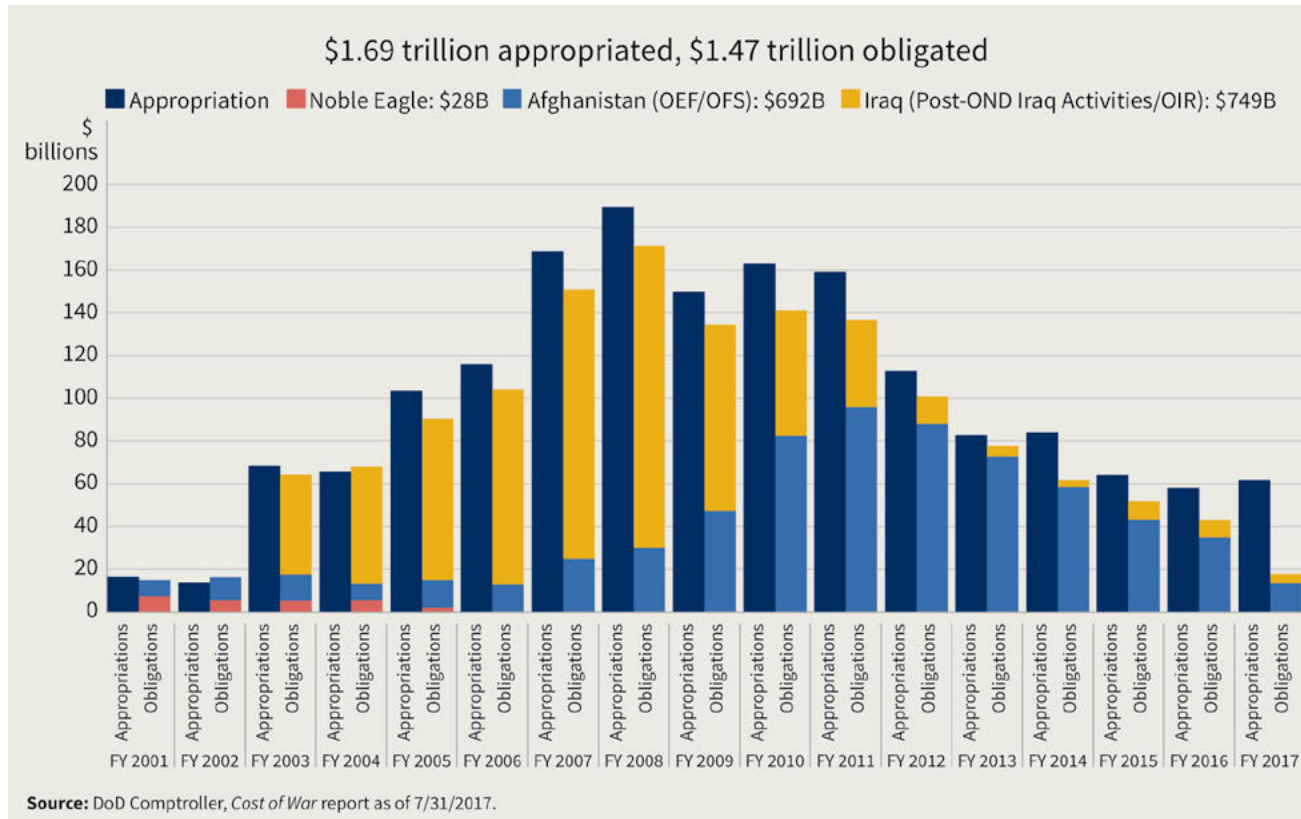
DoD Status of Funds

The President’s Budget for FY 2018 requested a total of \$639.1 billion for the DoD, of which \$64.6 billion is designated for OCO, including \$13.0 billion for OIR. Of the \$13.0 billion designated for OIR, \$1.8 billion would be used to train and equip partner forces in Iraq and Syria and maintain the current U.S. force posture of 5,765 troops in these two countries.²³⁵ The request in OCO funding is 15.7 percent less than the amount enacted in FY 2017 because the FY 2018 budget eliminates the practice of using OCO funds to support DoD base budget expenditures.²³⁶

The Counter-ISIS Train and Equip Fund (CTEF), appropriated as two-year funds (funds that may be obligated over a period of two fiscal years), has been congressionally notified and subsequently made available for execution a total of \$1.2 billion for FY 2017-2018.” Of this, the DoD had obligated \$879 million as of December 31, 2017. This includes \$419 million spent in Iraq, \$342 million spent in Syria, and \$118 million spent on border security in Jordan and Lebanon. From October 1 through December 31, 2017, the DoD obligated \$212 million through CTEF in Iraq and \$133 million through CTEF in Syria.²³⁷

Figure 1.

Total DoD War-Related Appropriations and Obligations since September 11, 2001



The DoD reported that while FYs 2016-2017 train and equip funds have now expired, a significant balance remains in FYs 2017-2018 funding. However, the lengthy procurement process, which can take up to 6 months after the Coalition makes a request for equipment, can result in the inaccurate perception of the level of funding actually available to support new requirements. Nevertheless, DoD officials reported that sufficient funding is available to resume paying stipends to the Peshmerga forces if permission is given to do so.²³⁸

In total, since September 11, 2001, Congress has appropriated \$1.69 trillion and the DoD has obligated \$1.47 trillion for war-related expenses in Iraq, Afghanistan, and related operations, as well as for homeland security missions under Operation Noble Eagle.²³⁹

According to the DoD’s *Cost of War* report, the DoD obligated \$6.4 billion in support of OIR from the start of FY 2017 through July 31, 2017, and a total of \$18.5 billion since the start of operations on August 8, 2014.²⁴⁰ Two previous DoD OIG audits on the *Cost of War* report found shortcomings in the accuracy and timeliness of the report, and in both cases, the components responded that steps would be taken to improve the accuracy and timeliness of reporting on OCO spending.²⁴¹

The DoD Comptroller stated that the DoD's efforts this fiscal year to undertake its first Department-wide financial statements audit will not have an immediate impact on the monthly *Cost of War* reporting. However, as this report is an extract of financial data from various DoD components, the Comptroller anticipated that as financial and enterprise resource planning systems become more sophisticated, enhanced automation would lead to improved data quality.²⁴²

DoS and USAID Status of Funds

The President's FY 2018 budget request for State, Foreign Operations, and Related Agencies contained a total of \$40.3 billion for the DoS and USAID, a reduction of \$17.2 billion (a 30 percent reduction) compared to the funding enacted for FY 2017. For FY 2018, the budget request included \$12 billion in global OCO funding, a reduction of \$8.8 billion (a 42 percent reduction) compared to the FY 2017 enacted funding. Of the amount requested for FY 2018, \$5.6 billion would support efforts to defeat ISIS and other terrorist organizations. These OCO funds would also support stabilization in liberated areas and help counter-ISIS operations. FY 2018 OCO funds requested for the DoS and USAID included a total of \$1.3 billion for operations and foreign assistance programs in Iraq and \$191.5 million for operations in Syria.

Table 3 provides a comparison of OCO funds expended, obligated, and requested for FYs 2014 through 2018 for operations in Iraq and Syria. Consistent with the Administration's request to decrease DoS global OCO spending by \$8.8 billion (42 percent) in FY 2018, there is a significant drop in FY 2018 OCO funding for Iraq and Syria when compared to the estimated amount of funding in FY 2017. Foreign Military Financing for Iraq, which was funded at \$250 million in FY 2016 and FY 2017, is absent from the FY 2018 request.

Between FY 2001 and FY 2018, total funding for the DoS and USAID grew by \$37.1 billion (168%). Figure 2 provides the funding levels for global enduring funds and OCO funds in the Department of State, Foreign Operations and Related Programs appropriations for FYs 2001 through 2017. The funding level for FY 2018 is the Administration's request, which was pending before the Congress as of January 24, 2018.

Table 3.

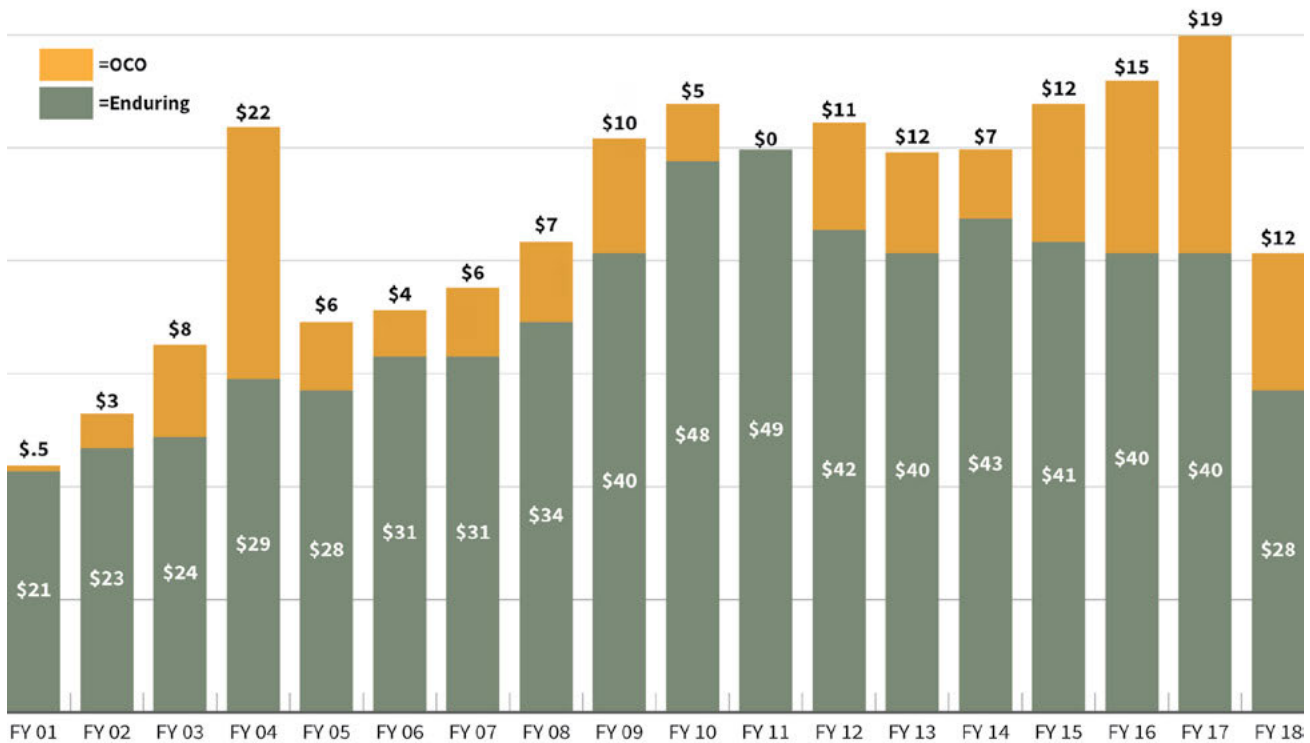
DoS and USAID OCO Funding for Iraq and Syria, in millions

	FY 2014 Actual	FY 2015 Actual	FY 2016 Actual	FY 2017 Estimate	FY 2018 Request
Iraq	\$1,332.12	\$1,150.4	\$1,246.7	\$1,997.9	\$1,320.3
Syria	\$8.3	\$46.9	\$177.1	\$742.9	\$191.5
TOTAL	\$1,340.5	\$1,197.3	\$1,423.8	\$2,740.8	\$1,511.8

Sources: DoS, 5/23/2017; Congressional Research Service, 9/15/2016.

Figure 2.

DoS/USAID Enduring and OCO Funding from FY 2001-FY 2018 (in billions)



Source: DoS, 5/23/2017; Congressional Research Service, 9/15/2016.

Foreign Military Financing Support to Iraq

The FY 2018 budget request did not include Foreign Military Financing (FMF) funds for Iraq, which previously supported Iraq’s purchase of U.S. military equipment to fight ISIS. During the past two fiscal years, the DoS used appropriated FMF funds to underwrite loans totaling \$3.8 billion to enable the Iraqi government to purchase, sustain, and maintain military vehicles, aircraft, and weapons. The Iraqi government considered these loans necessary to supplement the ISF due to the constraints imposed on the government’s resources by low oil prices and increased operational requirements in the fight against ISIS.²⁴³

In FY 2016, the United States provided the Iraqi government a \$2.7 billion Credit Facility (the “FMF loan”), the subsidy cost for which was funded with the entirety of Iraq’s \$250 million FY 2016 FMF allocation. The United States provided an FY 2017 Credit Facility to Iraq for \$1.105 billion, the subsidy cost for which was funded with \$150 million of Iraq’s \$250 million FY 2017 FMF allocation. The FY 2017 Credit Facility is designed to enable the ISF to continue its fight against ISIS, while at the same time enabling the government to build a more capable and sustainable ISF in the future.²⁴⁴

This quarter, the DoS acknowledged that some U.S.-provided military equipment was in the hands of non-authorized end-users.²⁴⁵ During the past quarter, news media reported that



Supported by the Coalition forces, the ISF receives vehicles to support their security operations. (U.S. Army photo)

PMF units had obtained as many as nine M1 Abrams tanks. These tanks, originally provided by the United States to the Iraqi Army, included some tanks seized by the PMF from ISIS after the fall of Mosul and the second battle of Tikrit.²⁴⁶ The DoS reported that the Iraqi government continued to address this issue and had obtained the return of several tanks to Iraqi Army control from the PMF during the quarter.²⁴⁷

The challenges for the DoS and DoD to account for the whereabouts of arms and equipment transferred to the ISF have grown since the fight to drive ISIS from Iraq.²⁴⁸ During the past quarter, the DoS reported that it continued to stress to the Iraqi government that it had an obligation to maintain U.S.-origin equipment under the operational control of the end-user designated in the sale agreement. Further, the DoS pressed Iraq to act as quickly as possible to return these articles to their intended recipients.²⁴⁹

Health and Safety Risks Found at U.S. Air Base in Qatar

On December 21, 2017, the DoD OIG issued a report on its evaluation of Al Udeid Air Base, Qatar. Located southwest of Doha, Al Udeid serves as a staging and operational base for the 379th Air Expeditionary Wing, which supports OIR and other CENTCOM operations. The objective of the DoD OIG's evaluation was to verify compliance with DoD health and safety policies and standards regarding indoor air quality, electrical systems, fire protection systems, and active and inactive fuel systems.²⁵⁰

KEY SUPPORT TO MISSION DEVELOPMENTS

■ OIG EVALUATION LEADS TO COMMITMENT TO IMPROVE FACILITIES

A DoD OIG evaluation revealed numerous health and safety risks to personnel and property at Al Udeid Air Base in Qatar, which serves as a base of operations for the 379th

Air Expeditionary Wing in support of OIR. In response to the OIG's recommendations, the base commander agreed to make necessary improvements to indoor air quality, electrical systems, fire protection systems, and fuel systems.

U.S. and Coalition partners participate in a joint Remembrance and Veterans Day ceremony at Al Udeid Air Base, Qatar. (U.S. Air National Guard photo)



The evaluation found a total of 253 deficiencies that posed risks to the health, safety, and well-being of DoD personnel, including 13 related to indoor air quality, 105 related to electrical systems (5 of them critical), 49 related to fire protection systems, and 86 related to inactive fuel systems. The report attributed these deficiencies to inadequate facility maintenance, moisture intrusion, and the acceptance of new construction that did not comply with DoD standards.²⁵¹

The 379th Air Expeditionary Wing's commander agreed with the OIG's recommendations and took action to mitigate and reduce the risks to personnel and property. An additional follow-up evaluation is required to ensure that corrective actions have resulted in compliance with requisite standards.²⁵²

KEY SUPPORT TO MISSION CHALLENGES

■ CONTINUING RESOLUTION IMPOSES LIMITATIONS ON THE OIR CAMPAIGN

The second quarter of FY 2018 opened with the DoD, DoS, and USAID funded by a continuing resolution, under which the DoD was prohibited from initiating new programs and adapting its acquisitions to meet the needs of a dynamic, changing battlefield. While short-term, stopgap funding measures prevent the Federal Government from shutting down, they also inhibit budget predictability and planning. While the DoD mission shifted from one of defeating ISIS to securing these gains, the DoD remained constrained by the lack of an approved budget for FY 2018.

■ THE IRAQI GOVERNMENT IS UNABLE TO FULLY ACCOUNT FOR U.S.-PROVIDED MILITARY MATERIEL

The DoS acknowledged that some U.S.-provided military equipment was in the hands of non-authorized end-users, including PMF units. The Iraqi government must maintain control over all arms and equipment provided by the United States, and the DoS urged Iraq to do so as quickly as possible.²⁵³

■ KURDISH INDEPENDENCE REFERENDUM JEOPARDIZES ASSISTANCE TO THE PESHMERGA

Following the KRG's non-binding vote on independence, the U.S. Government declined to renew its agreement to pay stipends to Kurdish Regional Guard Brigades. The yearlong agreement expired in July, and the last payments to support roughly 36,000 Iraqi Kurdish Peshmerga were transferred in early September.²⁵⁴ However, a DoD official noted that sufficient funding exists to resume the stipend payments if a future agreement is reached.²⁵⁵





Students pose for a photo at a primary school in Iraq. (U.S. Army photo)

HUMANITARIAN ASSISTANCE

Iraq Crisis	58
Syria Crisis	61



An Iraqi family walks home after being treated by doctors at the Mosul Dam Clinic, Mosul Dam Village, Iraq. (U.S. Army photo)

HUMANITARIAN ASSISTANCE

In Iraq, the humanitarian response focused on providing assistance to those affected by efforts to drive out ISIS, particularly in and around Mosul and western Anbar province.¹ As of December 31, 2017, there were approximately 2.6 million IDP in Iraq, according to the IOM.² This was down from 3.2 million IDPs at the start of the quarter,³ due to many IDPs returning to their places of origin.⁴ There were also an additional 260,000 Iraqi refugees remaining in neighboring countries, as reported by the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR).⁵

Humanitarian aid workers were able to reach civilians in areas of Anbar province and western Mosul previously controlled by ISIS.⁶ However, there was a decrease in access in areas affected by the Iraqi government's response to the September 25, 2017, Kurdish independence referendum.⁷ While the security situation improved overall in liberated areas, indirect fire and IEDs from ISIS continued to impact humanitarian operations in these areas.⁸

In Syria, relief organizations scaled up efforts in the northeast, providing assistance to an estimated 330,000 people per month in the region.⁹ In Raqqah, some IDPs began to return home as the SDF gained control over the city. The returnees, however, were affected by security concerns such as IEDs and unstable buildings, as well as limited basic services in the area.¹⁰ In Dayr az Zawr, separate advances against ISIS by the Syrian regime and the SDF resulted in increased displacement and civilian casualties.¹¹ In Eastern Ghouta, conflict and airstrikes led to civilian deaths and limited humanitarian access to the region.¹²

The U.S. Government implements humanitarian assistance activities in Syria and Iraq as distinct and separate from military operations through three operating units:

- **USAID/Office of U.S. Foreign Disaster Assistance (OFDA)** works with UN and international non-governmental organization partners to provide support to IDPs and other conflict affected populations in Syria and Iraq.
- **USAID/Office of Food for Peace (FFP)** provides food assistance to IDPs, refugees, and others in need who have been impacted by the crises in Syria and Iraq.
- **DoS/Bureau of Population, Refugees, and Migration (PRM)** works through the UN and other partners to protect and support IDPs, refugees, and other conflict victims in Syria and Iraq, and provides assistance to others in the surrounding countries who have been affected by these complex crises.

USAID and PRM receive appropriations for humanitarian assistance activities that are not designated in advance for use in responding to a particular humanitarian crisis, which allows the U.S. Government greater flexibility in responding to ongoing and emerging crises. OFDA and FFP primarily use International Disaster Assistance funds. FFP also uses a small amount of resources authorized by Title II Food Aid of the Agricultural Trade Development and Assistance Act of 1954 (Public Law 480) to respond to the Syria and Iraq complex crises. PRM uses Migration and Refugee Assistance funds for this purpose.¹³ Each office awards funds to implementing partners, which include various international organizations such as the UN Children’s Fund (UNICEF), the World Food Programme (WFP), the Office of the UNHCR, and the IOM, as well as private non-governmental organizations. These organizations carry out assistance programs on the ground in Syria, Iraq, and neighboring countries hosting Syrian and Iraqi refugees.¹⁴ Table 4 provides a breakdown of humanitarian assistance to the Syria and Iraq crises as of the end of the quarter.

Table 4.

Status of Cumulative FY 2015, FY 2016, FY 2017, and FY 2018 U.S. Government Humanitarian Assistance Funds for the Syria and Iraq Crises, as of December 31, 2017 (in millions/rounded)

Office	Syria Obligated	Syria Disbursed	Iraq Obligated	Iraq Disbursed
OFDA	\$882.3	\$487.7	\$534.9	\$364.2
FFP	\$1,094.5	\$1,306.6	\$412.9	\$160.0
PRM	\$2,376.7	\$2,608.7	\$732.8	\$727.2
TOTAL	\$4,353.6	\$4,403.0	\$1,680.6	\$1,251.4

Notes: USAID and the DoS reported disbursements that may exceed obligations because some disbursements during the reporting period were made against awards obligated in a different quarter or prior to FY 2015. In OIR reports prior to March 31, 2016, the DoS reported disbursements only from funds obligated from FY 2015 forward. Data on disbursements can provide valuable information about how much money has been spent on activities as well as the amounts of funding that remain available for expenditure. Provided a letter of credit from the U.S. Government, however, humanitarian assistance implementing partners may accrue expenses before drawing down on agency funds. For this reason, expenditures on humanitarian assistance activities sometimes exceed disbursements. Figures may not sum due to rounding.

Sources: USAID, OFDA/FFP, response to USAID OIG request for information, 1/12/2018; DoS, PRM, response to the DoS OIG request for information, 12/19/2017.

OFDA, FFP, and PRM rely on several types of personnel to execute their work, including U.S. Government employees, personal services contractors, and independent contractors. There are a total of 77 personnel assigned to the Iraq-Syria crisis response effort: 44 in Washington, D.C.; 10 in Iraq; 8 in Turkey; 9 in Jordan; 2 in Lebanon; 1 in Kuwait; and 3 in Hungary.¹⁵

IRAQ CRISIS

During the quarter, humanitarian assistance in Iraq focused on supporting IDPs as they began the process of returning home.¹⁶ The Iraqi government declared victory over ISIS in December, and the number of people returning home increased to more than 3.2 million by December 31, 2017, from less than 2.3 million just three months earlier.¹⁷ However, there were significant concerns during the quarter that the Iraqi government was forcing IDPs to return home even if the IDPs did not yet feel secure in doing so, according to the UN.¹⁸ The UNHCR guiding principles for addressing internal displacement state that returning to a place of origin should be safe, voluntary, and dignified.¹⁹

Humanitarian responders also faced challenges in accessing displaced populations in northern Iraq as a result of the Iraqi government's response to a September 2017 Kurdish independence referendum.²⁰ Humanitarian aid providers were hampered by checkpoint closures, particularly in Kirkuk and Ninewa provinces, and forced to route humanitarian aid shipments intended for northern Iraq through Baghdad because the Iraqi government halted international flights to Erbil.²¹ The Iraqi government also enforced visa requirements for international travelers, which affected nearly 1,000 humanitarian aid providers, including U.S. Government partners that did not have visas at the time of the referendum.²² As of December 26, more than 150,000 people remained displaced from disputed territory taken by the ISF.²³

Returnees continued to move in and out of Mosul throughout the quarter, and by mid-December, approximately 120,000 people had moved out of 12 IDP camps in Ninewa province.²⁴ Returnees cited improved safety, a desire to reunite with family, the resumption of basic services, and the desire to enroll their children in school as some of the main reasons for returning home.²⁵ While the increase in returns was a positive development, it also increased Iraq's food needs and placed additional pressure on the markets.²⁶ In Ninewa province, the WFP scaled up efforts to support the increased number of returnees, which was reportedly higher than anticipated, and also helped invest in local markets.²⁷

During the quarter, humanitarian assistance in Iraq focused on supporting IDPs as they began the process of returning home.

KEY HUMANITARIAN ASSISTANCE DEVELOPMENTS IN IRAQ

■ 800,000 PEOPLE STILL DISPLACED IN MOSUL RECEIVE HUMANITARIAN ASSISTANCE

Humanitarian responders provided assistance to IDPs from Mosul, 800,000 of whom remained displaced this quarter, according to the International Organization for Migration.²⁸

■ THE LIBERATION OF ANBAR PROVINCE RESULTS IN THOUSANDS OF NEWLY DISPLACED PEOPLE

ISIS's defeat in strongholds in the western province of Anbar resulted in the displacement of 22,000 people and additional support needed for residents who sheltered in place.²⁹ Humanitarian responders provided assistance to both populations.³⁰

IRAQ: QUARTERLY FOCUS OF HUMANITARIAN ASSISTANCE

KIRKUK AND NINEWA

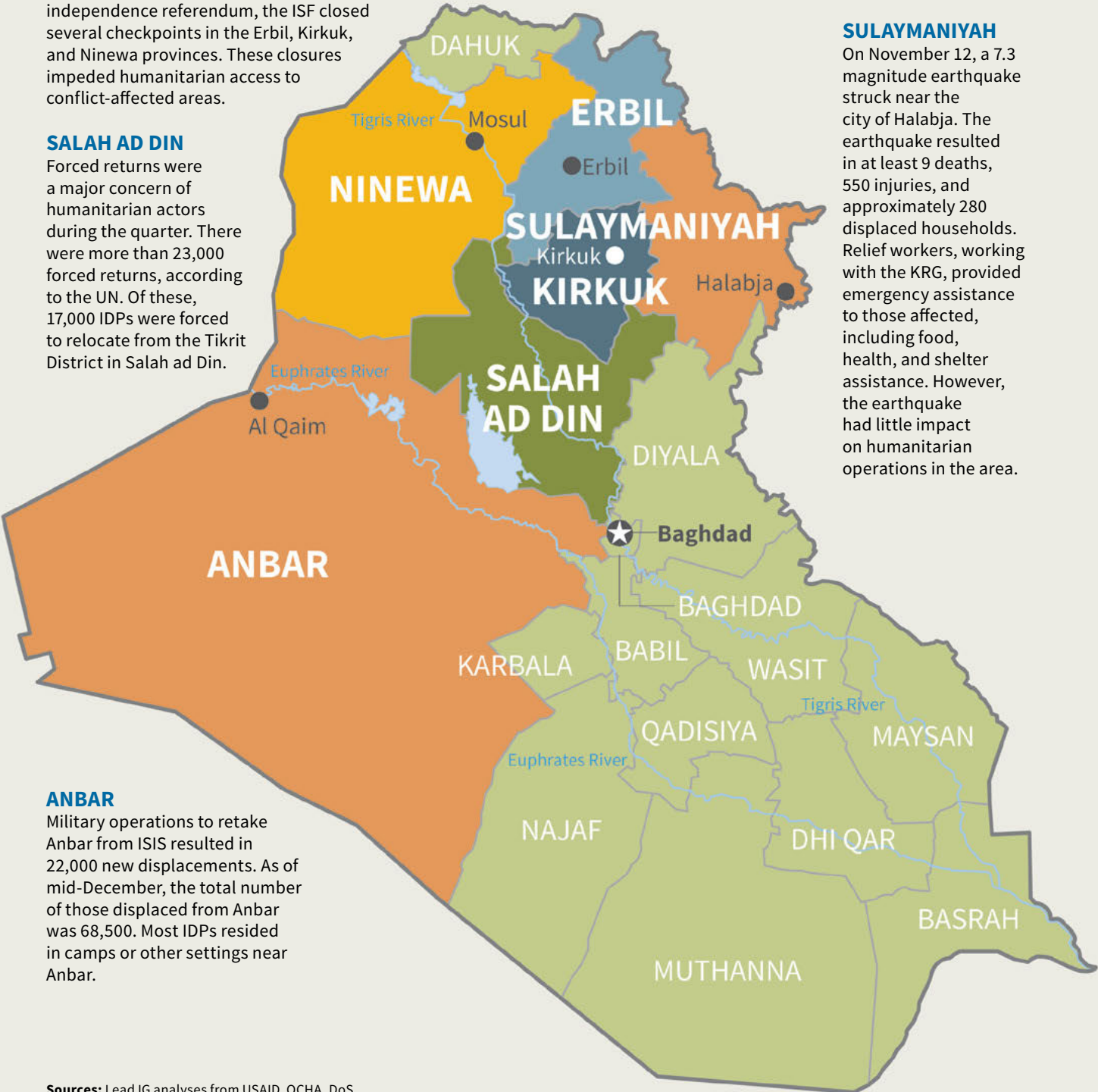
Following the September 25th Kurdish independence referendum, the ISF closed several checkpoints in the Erbil, Kirkuk, and Ninewa provinces. These closures impeded humanitarian access to conflict-affected areas.

SALAH AD DIN

Forced returns were a major concern of humanitarian actors during the quarter. There were more than 23,000 forced returns, according to the UN. Of these, 17,000 IDPs were forced to relocate from the Tikrit District in Salah ad Din.

SULAYMANIYAH

On November 12, a 7.3 magnitude earthquake struck near the city of Halabja. The earthquake resulted in at least 9 deaths, 550 injuries, and approximately 280 displaced households. Relief workers, working with the KRG, provided emergency assistance to those affected, including food, health, and shelter assistance. However, the earthquake had little impact on humanitarian operations in the area.



ANBAR

Military operations to retake Anbar from ISIS resulted in 22,000 new displacements. As of mid-December, the total number of those displaced from Anbar was 68,500. Most IDPs resided in camps or other settings near Anbar.

Sources: Lead IG analyses from USAID, OCHA, DoS

Internally displaced persons arrive at a screening point in Dibis, Iraq. (U.S. Army photo)



As of December 2017, nearly a third of IDPs were located in Ninewa province, where approximately 800,000 people remained displaced, according to the IOM.³¹ Humanitarian organizations worked to provide adequate shelter to IDPs from Mosul, over half of which were sheltered in 16 camps and 2 emergency sites set up by the Iraqi government and humanitarian partners.³² Water, sanitation, and hygiene services continued to remain a concern, with relief agencies reportedly trucking in 800,000 gallons of safe drinking water a day.³³ Humanitarian efforts also included protection services, legal aid, health care, and psychosocial support.³⁴

The liberation of remaining ISIS strongholds in western Anbar province resulted in the displacement of 22,000 people.³⁵ Humanitarian organizations provided assistance to those fleeing the fighting, and coordinated transportation for IDPs seeking shelter in nearby camps.³⁶ The WFP provided rations to more than 8,300 households displaced by the fighting.³⁷ Many civilians remained in place during the military operations. Humanitarian aid workers provided food and health care as well as water, sanitation and hygiene programs to more than 21,000 people in these areas.³⁸ With the liberation of western Anbar, humanitarian workers were able to reach an estimated 50,000 people in al Qaim and surrounding desert areas for the first time in nearly three years.³⁹ They were also able to provide support to the 66,000 people displaced since January 2017.⁴⁰

KEY HUMANITARIAN ASSISTANCE CHALLENGES IN IRAQ

■ THOUSANDS OF DISPLACED IRAQIS WERE FORCED TO RETURN TO THEIR PLACES OF ORIGIN

More than 23,000 Iraqis were forced to return home against their will, according to the UN, a problem particularly prevalent in Anbar and Salah ad Din provinces.⁴¹ Humanitarian organizations continued to emphasize the importance of ensuring that the return of displaced persons should be safe, dignified, and voluntary, in accordance with international law.⁴²

■ KURDISH INDEPENDENCE REFERENDUM IMPEDES HUMANITARIAN RESPONDERS IN NORTHERN IRAQ

As a result of increased political tensions following the September 2017 Kurdish referendum on independence, the Iraqi government limited access to northern Iraq and created additional visa burdens for humanitarian aid workers.⁴³ The government issued emergency visas for aid workers traveling to southern and central Iraq, but only for single entry.⁴⁴

Humanitarian assistance was concentrated in northeastern Syria this quarter, where fighting between the SDF and ISIS in Raqqah caused thousands of Syrians to flee and ISIS's defeat in October allowed people to return home.

SYRIA CRISIS

Humanitarian assistance was concentrated in northeastern Syria this quarter, where fighting between the SDF and ISIS in Raqqah caused thousands of Syrians to flee and ISIS's defeat in October allowed people to return home.⁴⁵ The SDF declared the former ISIS "capital" liberated on October 20, but the presence of explosive hazards prevented Syrians from returning home and hampered humanitarian responders' access to the city.⁴⁶ In addition, the fighting destroyed much of the city's infrastructure.⁴⁷ An October 2017 assessment found that there were no functioning bakeries, health care services, or electricity, and that only one market remained open.⁴⁸ There was also insufficient safe drinking water and many houses were damaged.⁴⁹ Within the city, 80 percent of all buildings were considered at risk of collapse.⁵⁰ Due to these hazards, the UN and humanitarian agencies were advising displaced people not to return to the city.⁵¹

In November, local governments and humanitarian organizations accelerated the process of moving IDPs from the four displacement sites outside of Raqqah to new locations in Aleppo and Damascus.⁵² However, a lack of identity documents among IDPs as well as a lack of transportation and limited number of screening personnel slowed the number of departures.⁵³ Humanitarian responders said many IDPs at transit sites were at risk of having their identification cards confiscated, being separated from their families, or limited in their movements.⁵⁴

Fighting in Dayr az Zawr generated large-scale displacement from and within the province.⁵⁵ The arrival of IDPs from Dayr az Zawr to formal and informal camps, especially in Hasakah and Raqqah, added to the existing demand for services and forced humanitarian aid workers to scale up activities to meet the needs of new arrivals.⁵⁶

In the Eastern Ghouta region near Damascus, nearly 200 civilians were killed between mid-November and mid-December in attacks carried out by the Syrian regime, despite the establishment of the region as a de-escalation zone in August.⁵⁷ The conflict continued to impede the delivery of humanitarian aid to the region and medical evacuations remained a challenge.⁵⁸ The Syrian Arab Red Crescent and the International Committee of the Red Cross assisted with the evacuation of 29 people beginning on December 29, but approximately 500 more needed urgent medical care.⁵⁹

KEY HUMANITARIAN ASSISTANCE DEVELOPMENTS IN SYRIA

■ IDPS RETURN TO RAQQAH AS CONFLICT SUBSIDES

An estimated 34,000 people returned to Raqqah and surrounding areas between the end of October and the beginning of December as the SDF advanced on ISIS positions in the city and declared victory on October 20.⁶⁰ Humanitarian aid agencies continued to emphasize that it was not yet safe for IDPs to return to Raqqah due to the presence of explosive hazards.⁶¹

■ CONFLICT IN DAYR AZ ZAWR LEADS TO NEW DISPLACEMENTS

Military operations in Dayr az Zawr resulted in the large-scale displacement of civilians, as an estimated 270,000 people fled their homes during October, including more than 115,000 during one week.⁶²

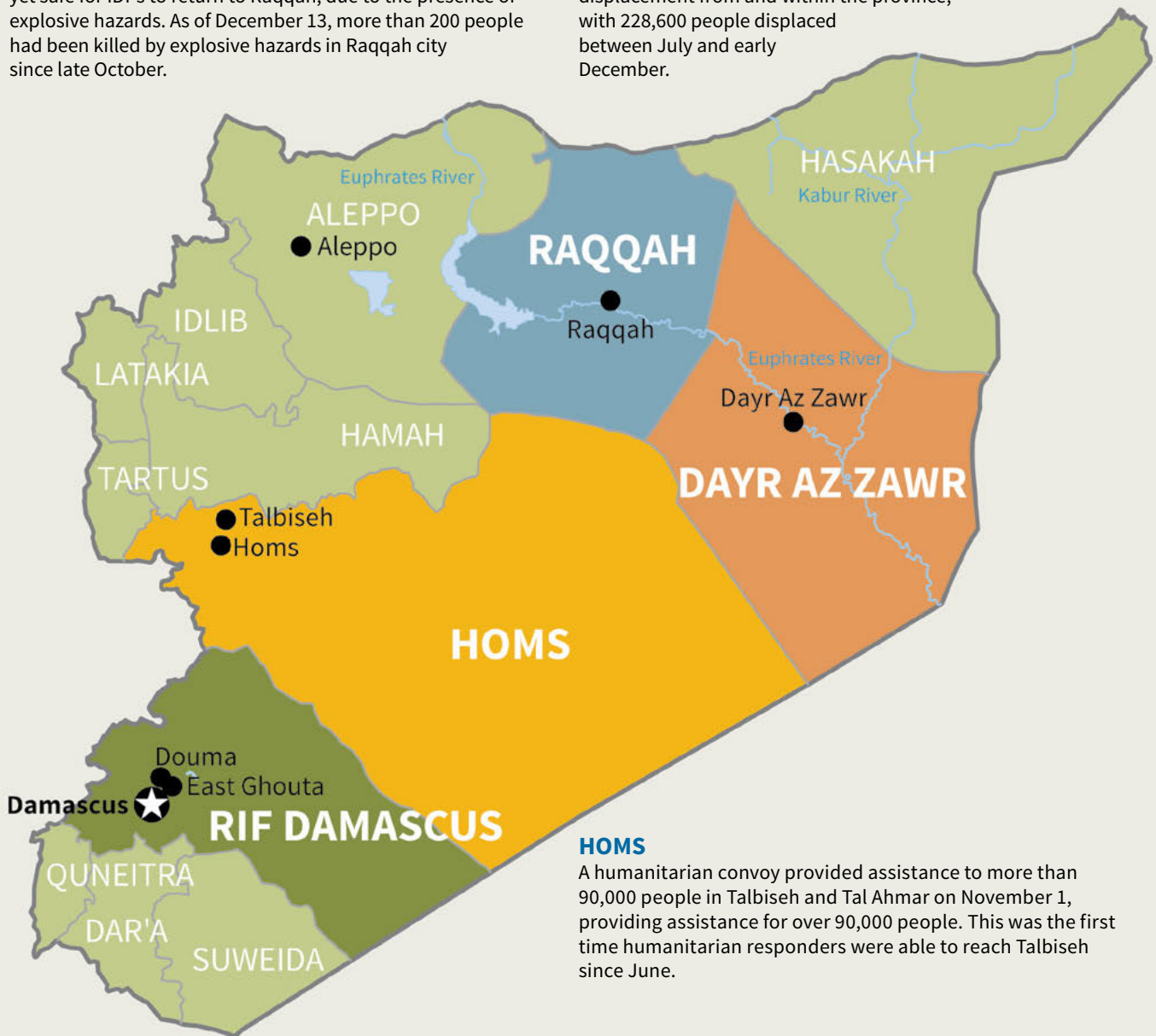
SYRIA: QUARTERLY FOCUS OF HUMANITARIAN ASSISTANCE

RAQQAH

Humanitarian actors continued messaging that it was not yet safe for IDPs to return to Raqqah, due to the presence of explosive hazards. As of December 13, more than 200 people had been killed by explosive hazards in Raqqah city since late October.

DAYR AZ ZAWR

Military operations in Dayr Az Zawr led to large-scale displacement from and within the province, with 228,600 people displaced between July and early December.



HOMS

A humanitarian convoy provided assistance to more than 90,000 people in Talbiseh and Tal Ahmar on November 1, providing assistance for over 90,000 people. This was the first time humanitarian responders were able to reach Talbiseh since June.

RIF DAMASCUS

Three humanitarian convoys reached the Eastern Ghouta region in October and November, the first time humanitarian assistance had reached some of the cities since June. This assistance was only sufficient to cover the needs of 17 percent of the population.

Sources: Lead IG analyses from USAID, OCHA.



Eastern Ghouta also suffered from a severe food shortage, as some areas had not received supplies since June 2017, while aid deliveries to other areas covered the needs of only 17 percent of the population.⁶³ In mid-November, food prices in the city of Douma were 15 times higher than in Damascus, and the cost of bread was 85 times higher.⁶⁴ The situation was expected to worsen, as decreased fuel availability and newly imposed local taxes impact the price of essential commodities.⁶⁵ Furthermore, airstrikes in mid-November damaged food stocks that would have been sufficient to feed 540 people for one month.⁶⁶ To cope with the situation, residents have resorted to consuming expired food, refuse, or animal fodder, and skipping meals.⁶⁷

Medical equipment is delivered to a new Raqqah Civil Council medical facility in Khatuniyah, Syria. (U.S. Army photo)

Interagency convoys reached besieged and hard-to-reach locations in Damascus, rural Damascus, and Homs.⁶⁸ Seven convoys in October and five in November transported food, health, shelter, protection, and water, sanitation, and hygiene assistance.⁶⁹ The coordination of cross-border assistance was also successful, with 200 trucks arriving from Jordan and nearly 460 from Turkey.⁷⁰

KEY HUMANITARIAN ASSISTANCE CHALLENGES IN SYRIA

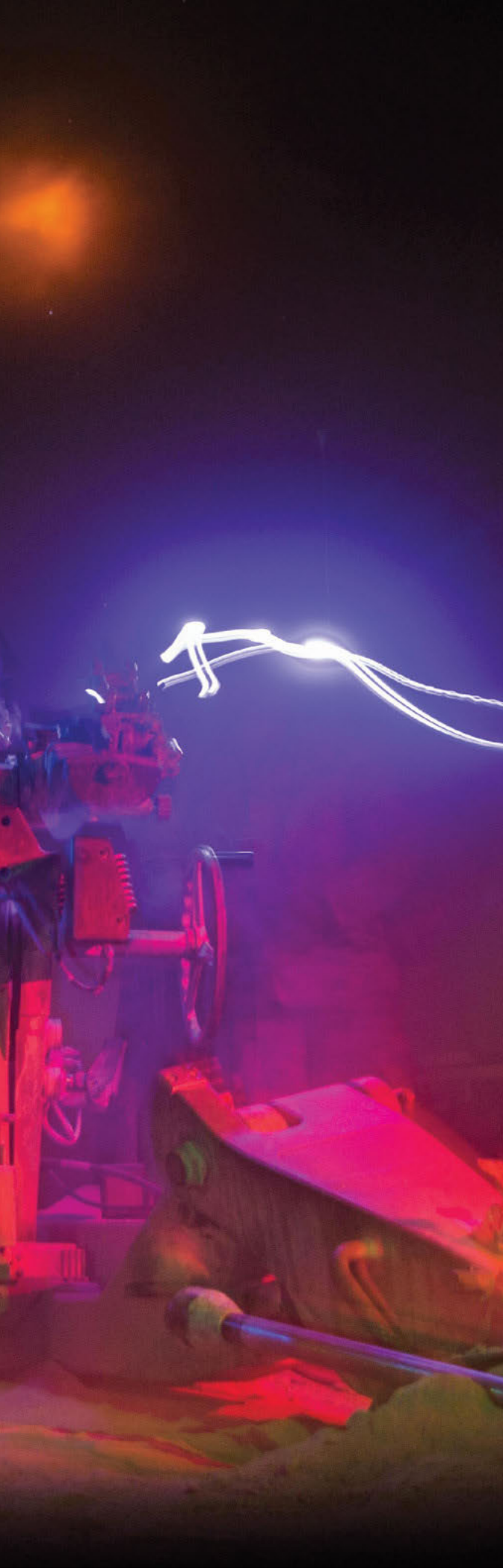
■ SECURITY CONCERNS IMPACT THE NUMBER OF PEOPLE RETURNING TO RAQQAH

Unexploded IEDs remained a major concern for Syrians seeking to return to Raqqah. The UN reported that 209 civilians were killed by IEDs between October 20, when the SDF declared the city liberated from ISIS, and December 13.⁷¹ Security concerns also limited aid workers' access to the city, although some food assistance was being provided through local partners.⁷²

■ HUMANITARIAN ACCESS LIMITED IN EASTERN GHOUTA

An interagency convoy provided emergency food and assistance to 21,000 people in Douma.⁷³ The November 12 delivery was the first in almost three months, due to restricted access to the city by Syrian regime forces.⁷⁴ This followed an October 31 convoy that provided multi-sector assistance for approximately 40,000 people in nearby Kafr Batna in Eastern Ghouta.⁷⁵





U.S. Army soldiers fire a Howitzer M-777 A2 in support of coalition forces near Rawah, Iraq. (U.S. Army photo)

COMPLETED OVERSIGHT ACTIVITIES

Lead IG Staffing	66
Outreach	66
Completed Audit, Inspection, and Evaluation Reports	68
Investigations	72
Hotline Activity	75

COMPLETED OVERSIGHT ACTIVITY

As required by Section 8L of the Inspector General Act of 1978, the Lead IG is responsible for providing comprehensive oversight and reporting over all aspects of the overseas contingency operation, in coordination with the DoS IG and the USAID IG. This partnership allows for either joint or individual audits, inspections, and investigations, and is intended to provide independent and effective oversight of all federal programs and operations supporting the overseas contingency operation. This section of the report provides information on Lead IG staffing; outreach efforts by Lead IG agencies; completed Lead IG and partner agencies' oversight work related to audits, inspections, and evaluations; Lead IG investigative activity; and the OIGs' hotline activities from October 1 through December 31, 2017.

LEAD IG STAFFING

The Lead IG agencies use dedicated, rotational, and temporary employees as well as contractors to conduct oversight projects, investigate fraud and corruption, and perform various operational activities such as strategic planning and reporting. Following an expeditionary workforce model, some oversight staff from the Lead IG agencies are stationed in offices in Iraq, Kuwait, Qatar, and Germany. Oversight teams from these offices and from offices in the United States travel to Jordan, Turkey, and other locations in the region to conduct fieldwork for their projects. The USAID OIG also has a Philippines field office in Manila.

OUTREACH

Outreach and coordination continue to be important aspects of Lead IG's mission. During the quarter, senior officials from the Lead IG agencies traveled to Afghanistan, Kuwait, and Iraq in early November to meet with senior military, diplomatic, and development officials executing U.S. interagency strategy in OIR and OFS. The IGs also held high-level meetings with their oversight partners to coordinate oversight efforts and they participated in activities to share the Lead IG model with new audiences. Senior Lead IG officials, representing the DoD OIG, DoS OIG, and USAID OIG regularly meet with policy officials, collect information, and conduct research related to OIR's military, governance, and humanitarian assistance activities.

Whole-of-Government Meetings to Engage Lead IG Partners

U.S. government leaders recognize that a whole-of-government effort is critical to defeat ISIS. As a result, coordinated whole-of-government oversight is important, which is what the Lead IG agencies seek to achieve.

Lead IG Team Travels to Southwest Asia

In November 2017, the Lead Inspector General for Overseas Contingency Operations team traveled to Afghanistan, Kuwait, and Iraq to meet with senior military, diplomatic, and development officials executing U.S. interagency strategy in OIR and OFS. The key members of the delegation were the DoD Deputy Inspector General for Overseas Contingency Operations, the USAID Deputy Inspector General, and the DoS Assistant Inspector General for Overseas Contingency Operations.

The OIG delegation stopped first at Bagram Air Field, Afghanistan, where they learned about current military operations. After traveling to Kabul, the team received several classified operational and intelligence briefings with senior U.S. and NATO officials, and met with embassy officials. DoS and USAID officials at the embassy provided the delegation with a series of briefings regarding political, economic, and anti-corruption initiatives in Afghanistan.

After their time in Afghanistan, the team traveled to Camp Arifjan, Kuwait, where they met with senior Combined Joint Task Force – OIR staff. The staff provided an operational status update of activities meant to defeat ISIS in Iraq and Syria. The delegation then proceeded to Baghdad, where they met with the OIR Commander, and with the Deputy Chief of Mission, U.S. Embassy Baghdad. That discussion covered the planned Iraqi elections, and economic and development initiatives undertaken by the United States, Coalition partners, and the United Nations, including the care of internally displaced persons returning to area liberated from ISIS.

In January, just after the quarter ended, the Inspectors General from DoD, DoS, and USAID traveled to Qatar, Iraq, and Afghanistan to gain a better understanding on the status of overseas contingency operations. The IGs met with military commanders, the U.S. Ambassadors in Iraq and Afghanistan, the USAID Chiefs of Mission, many other civilian and military officials, as well as OIG staff deployed to the region. The delegation sought to obtain a fuller understanding of the status of U.S. efforts in the region, to assess the whole-of-government approach to defeating ISIS, and to help develop oversight plans for overseas contingency operations. The meetings were candid, productive, and comprehensive and the IGs returned with a much more nuanced understanding of current challenges, issues, and key developments in both theaters of operations. The IGs noted some of the similarities in the two operations and will provide more details on this trip and the key issues that emerged in subsequent quarterly reports and in other venues.

The whole-of-government approach extends beyond the DoD, DoS, and USAID OIGs. The Lead IG's mission is supported by several other U.S. Government oversight entities including the Department of the Treasury (Treasury), which conducts programs to disrupt ISIS finances; the Department of Justice (DoJ), which conducts programs and prosecutions to disrupt ISIS networks and stop the flow of foreign terrorist fighters; and the Department of Homeland Security (DHS), which focuses on protecting the homeland. During the quarter, the IGs for DoD, DoS, and USAID met to discuss Lead IG oversight and opportunities for continued coordination.

COMPLETED AUDIT, INSPECTION, AND EVALUATION REPORTS

The Lead IG agencies and their partner agencies completed seven reports related to OIR from October 1 through December 31, 2017. These reports examined various activities in support of OIR, including counter narcotics, construction and/or maintenance of facilities, contract management, and weapons destruction.

Final Reports

DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE OFFICE OF INSPECTOR GENERAL

Army's Emergency Management Program in Kuwait

DODIG-2018-019; November 7, 2017

DoD IG performed an audit to determine whether the DoD established and maintained a comprehensive emergency management program for Army installations in Kuwait.

This report is classified.

U.S. Military-Occupied Facilities Evaluation—Al Udeid Air Base, Qatar

DODIG-2018-049; December 21, 2017

The DoD OIG conducted an evaluation to assess whether U.S. military-occupied facilities at Al Udeid Air Base in Qatar complied with DoD health and safety policies and standards regarding indoor air quality, electrical systems, fire protection systems, and active and inactive fuel systems.

The DoD OIG determined that the indoor air quality, electrical systems, fire protection systems, and inactive fuel systems were not being maintained in accordance with DoD health and safety policies and standards. Conversely, the DoD OIG determined that active fuel systems at Al Udeid Air Base were generally maintained in accordance with DoD health and safety policies and standards. Overall, the DoD OIG identified a total of 253 deficiencies that could affect the health, safety, and well-being of DoD personnel at Al Udeid Air Base: 13 deficiencies related to indoor air quality, 105 related to electrical systems, 49 related to fire protection systems, and 86 related to inactive fuel systems. The deficiencies identified by the DoD OIG during the evaluation occurred because the DoD had accepted new construction that did not comply with DoD health and safety policies and standards.

The DoD OIG recommended that the Commander, 379th Air Expeditionary Wing, conduct a root cause analysis to determine the source of the moisture found in the occupied facilities, in addition to an assessment of the fuel system pipelines to determine if they were installed and maintained in accordance with the American Petroleum Institute piping inspection code. The DoD OIG also recommended that the Commander implement a corrective action plan to ensure that all construction projects are reviewed for compliance with the Unified Facilities Criteria and the National Fire Protection Association standards as well all other applicable fire protection and fuel systems codes and standards before they are accepted by the U.S. Government as complete.

The Commander agreed with the DoD OIG's findings and recommendations and has taken action to mitigate and reduce the risks to U.S. Government personnel and property. The DoD OIG will conduct an additional follow-up evaluation to determine whether the corrective actions have resulted in compliance with requisite standards.

U.S. Central and U.S. Africa Commands' Oversight of Counternarcotics Activities

DODIG-2018-059; December 26, 2017

The DoD OIG conducted an audit to assess whether CENTCOM and U.S. Africa Command (AFRICOM) effectively provided oversight of counternarcotics activities.

The DoD OIG determined that the commands did not provide effective oversight of counternarcotics activities in FYs 2014 through 2016. Specifically, neither organization maintained reliable data for the completion status (whether activities were planned, executed, or canceled) and funding of counternarcotics training, equipping, and construction activities. In addition, the DoD OIG found that CENTCOM could have more effectively planned its counternarcotics activities by identifying its theater campaign plan objectives for each activity. As a result, neither organization could determine whether its programs effectively used the \$496 million reported as transferred from Office of the Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for Counternarcotics and Global Threats to counter illicit drug trafficking in FYs 2014 through 2016.

The DoD OIG recommended that the Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for Counternarcotics and Global Threats define the combatant commanders' and military services' roles and responsibilities for oversight of counternarcotics activities, including tracking the completion status and funding of individual counternarcotics activities. The DoD OIG also recommended that CENTCOM and AFRICOM develop and formalize procedures to track the completion status and funding of counternarcotics activities and that CENTCOM develop and formalize procedures to link each activity to the theatre campaign plan objectives.

The DoD OIG considered management comments on the draft report when preparing the final report. Comments from the Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for Counternarcotics and Global Threats addressed the recommendations, concurred with them, and is taking action to address the findings. The recommendations to the Office of the Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for Counternarcotics and Global Threats is considered resolved and will be closed upon receipt of the signed DoD Instruction. For the recommendations made to CENTCOM,

they were asked to provide additional comments by January 26, 2018. AFRICOM was not required to comment on the report because the recommendation to it was considered closed.

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

Feature Report: Oversight in Challenging Environments: Lessons From the Syria Response

November 9, 2017

USAID OIG has identified serious issues in U.S. humanitarian assistance efforts in nonpermissive environments, such as Syria, demonstrating the need for oversight to ensure the effective delivery of the humanitarian assistance. Recognizing this, its observations of the humanitarian crises in Syria could serve as a model for examining other humanitarian assistance efforts. USAID OIG prepared a report to take stock of important lessons learned that could be applied elsewhere.

As the Syria crisis continues, the need to sustain and improve the delivery of emergency humanitarian assistance to those in need is critical. U.S. Government funds supporting these efforts must be properly utilized in the process. As our experience demonstrates, strong oversight is vital to preventing fraud from reducing the effectiveness and efficiency of USAID's humanitarian assistance.

USAID OIG has identified several key elements of an effective humanitarian assistance response in nonpermissive environments like Syria. These include: effective fraud and loss-reporting systems; robust Agency oversight and monitoring systems; strong internal controls in implementing partner organizations; sound procurement processes; and broad information sharing on fraud risks and indicators.

In response to the USAID OIG observations in these areas, USAID reported taking several actions to improve fraud detection, monitoring and oversight, procurement processes, and accountability in Syria humanitarian assistance programs. USAID took actions such as partially suspending awards and debarring or suspending 36 individuals or companies. An additional 20 individuals were removed from employment, downgraded, or resigned. USAID also reported that it instituted 15 systemic changes to help prevent and detect fraud in USAID programming.

USAID OIG has not yet verified that USAID has fully implemented the reforms it has described or had a chance to determine whether the reforms have been effective at addressing the underlying problems.

DEPARTMENT OF HOMELAND SECURITY OFFICE OF INSPECTOR GENERAL

FAMS' Contribution to Aviation Transportation Security is Questionable

OIG-18-04; October 24, 2017

The DHS OIG conducted this audit to determine the extent to which the Federal Air Marshal Service (FAMS) contributes to the Transportation Security Administration's layered approach to security. The Federal Air Marshal Service's overall mission is to detect, deter, and defeat criminal, terrorist, and hostile activities that target our nation's transportation system. The Federal Air Marshal Service is Transportation Security Administration's only law enforcement layer of in-flight security.

The DHS OIG identified limitations with FAMS contributions to aviation security, but the results are not publically releasable.

The DHS OIG made five recommendations that, if implemented, should improve FAMS operations. The DHS OIG also identified a part of the operations where, if discontinued, funds could be put to better use.

The Transportation Security Administration concurred with three recommendations and did not concur with two recommendations.

This report is classified.

DHS Needs a More Unified Approach to Immigration Enforcement and Administration

OIG-18-07; October 30, 2017

The DHS OIG conducted this audit to determine whether the DHS fosters collaboration and unity of effort Department-wide to enforce and administer immigration policy.

The DHS OIG identified issues related to mission allocation and expenditure comparisons, the affirmative asylum application process, and the Department's struggle to understand immigration outcomes and decisions. The DHS OIG also identified coordination difficulties in making sufficient bed space available, providing language services, and processing aliens. These issues existed because DHS did not have a designated responsible official or department-level group that strategically addressed overarching issues to foster coordination and resolution. The DHS OIG found that without a more unified approach to immigration enforcement and administration that includes efficiency in management of resources, the Department would continue to allow vulnerabilities that may affect national security and public safety.

The DHS OIG recommended DHS establish a formal department-level group to facilitate long-term solutions for overarching component immigration enforcement and administration challenges, and to improve efficiencies.

DHS concurred with the recommendation.

FEMA and CBP Oversight of Operation Stonegarden Program Needs Improvement

OIG-18-13; November 7, 2017

The DHS OIG performed an audit of Operation Stonegarden Grant Program (Stonegarden) funds to determine whether the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) and U.S. Customs and Border Protection have sufficient oversight of Operation Stonegarden grants to ensure proper administration and effective spending of the awarded funds. Operation Stonegarden grants fund investments in joint efforts to secure the United States entry points along international borders, including travel corridors in states bordering Mexico and Canada, as well as states and territories with international water borders.

The DHS OIG found that FEMA and U.S. Customs and Border Protection did not meet their oversight responsibilities to monitor Stonegarden grantees, issue guidance and approve costs, and demonstrate program performance. Specifically, the DHS OIG found that FEMA did not have accurate financial data to identify grantees that require additional monitoring. Additionally, the DHS OIG found that FEMA and U.S. Customs and Border Protection had not issued adequate guidance or conducted thorough reviews of proposed Stonegarden spending. Moreover, the DHS OIG found that FEMA and U.S. Customs and Border Protection had not collected reliable program data or developed measures to demonstrate program performance resulting from the use of more than \$531.5 million awarded under Stonegarden since FY 2008.

The DHS OIG made seven recommendations, including that the FEMA Assistant Administrator for the Grants Programs Directorate improve oversight to ensure Stonegarden funds are used in accordance with grant guidance and Federal laws by collecting and maintaining financial information at the Stonegarden award level. Additionally, the DHS OIG recommended that the FEMA Assistant Administrator for the Grants Programs Directorate improve program guidance, enforcement, and tracking of Stonegarden outputs and law enforcement activities.

FEMA and the Grants Programs Directorate concurred with six of the seven recommendations and did not concur with the remaining recommendation. In its response, FEMA said that it complies with the monitoring requirements contained in the Homeland Security Act of 2002, as amended, which requires FEMA to monitor grants provided to each state and high-risk urban area not less than once every 2 years.

INVESTIGATIONS

The investigative components of the Lead IG agencies and their partner agencies continued to conduct investigative activity related to OIR during the quarter. The Lead IG agencies used forward-deployed investigators in Kuwait, Qatar, Iraq, Saudi Arabia, and United Arab Emirates, as well as in Germany and Washington, D.C., to conduct their OIR-related investigations.

Investigative Activity

During the quarter, multiple Lead IG investigations resulted seven contractor suspensions and debarments, the removal of two employees from federal service, six personnel actions, eight other actions, and savings or recoveries of \$34,367.

Investigative branches of the Lead IG agencies and their partner agencies closed 15 investigations, initiated 8 new investigations, and coordinated on 74 open investigations involving procurement fraud, corruption, grant fraud, theft, program irregularities, computer intrusions, and dealing with combating trafficking-in-persons allegations. They continue to coordinate their investigative efforts through the Fraud and Corruption Investigative Working Group, which consists of representatives from the Defense Criminal Investigative Service (DCIS, the DoD OIG's investigative division), the DoS OIG, USAID OIG, the U.S. Army Criminal Investigation Command, the Naval Criminal Investigative Service, and the Air Force Office of Special Investigations. This quarter, the Fraud and Corruption Investigative Working Group conducted 17 fraud awareness briefings for 211 participants.

The dashboard on the following page contains a consolidated look at the activities of these investigative components during this quarter.

NORTHERN VIRGINIA COMPANY SETTLES FALSE CLAIM ALLEGATIONS

In October 2017, a Virginia-based company, Triple Canopy Inc. (TCI), agreed to pay the U.S. Government \$2,600,000 to settle civil False Claims Act allegations. The allegations stemmed from a qui tam lawsuit, which involved a contract awarded to TCI by Joint Contracting Command Iraq. The contract was to provide security at various forward operating bases in Iraq and Kuwait and required TCI security personnel to be proficient in the use of firearms, as required by U.S. Army regulations. Specifically, the complaint alleged that records submitted by TCI might have been falsified to cover up substandard security guard firearms qualifications. This settlement was the result of a joint investigation between DCIS and the U.S. Army Criminal Investigation Division, Major Procurement Fraud Unit.

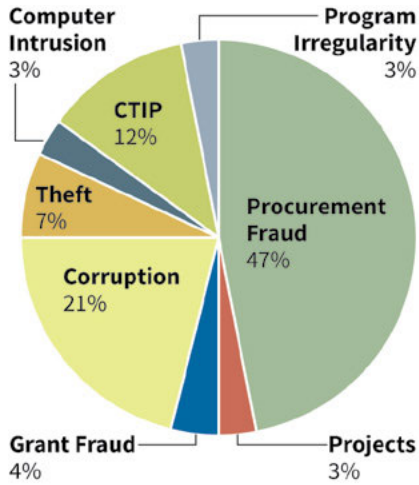
ONGOING INVESTIGATION INTO NON-GOVERNMENTAL ORGANIZATION FRAUD RING RESULTS IN DEBARMENT

An ongoing USAID OIG investigation into bid rigging, collusion, bribery, and kickbacks between Turkish vendors and procurement staff from four non-governmental organizations in southeastern Turkey resulted this quarter in the debarment of an individual in December 2017. The investigation has thus far uncovered evidence of rings of Turkish vendors who colluded with corrupt procurement staff among USAID's implementers conducting cross-border programs to provide humanitarian assistance to Syrian internally displaced persons.

This investigation previously resulted in the termination of 7 employees, 1 employee suspension, 5 employee resignations, 16 debarments of individuals and companies, 13 systemic changes by USAID offices affecting award management, program oversight, internal processes, and fraud prevention efforts, and the suspension of \$239 million in program funds for the non-governmental organizations under investigation.

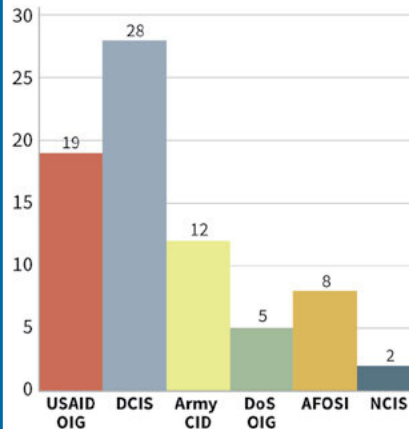
ACTIVITY BY FRAUD AND CORRUPTION INVESTIGATIVE WORKING GROUP

OPERATION INHERENT RESOLVE
As of December 31, 2017

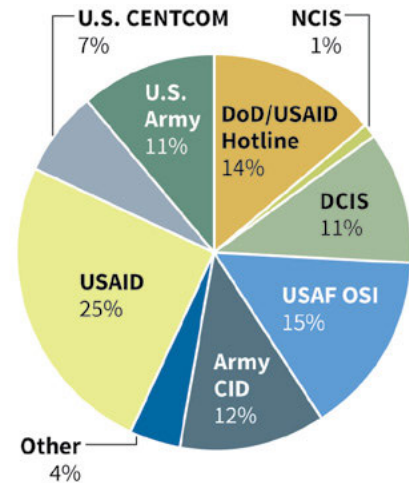


OPEN INVESTIGATIONS
74

OPEN INVESTIGATIONS BY WORKING GROUP MEMBER*



SOURCES OF ALLEGATIONS



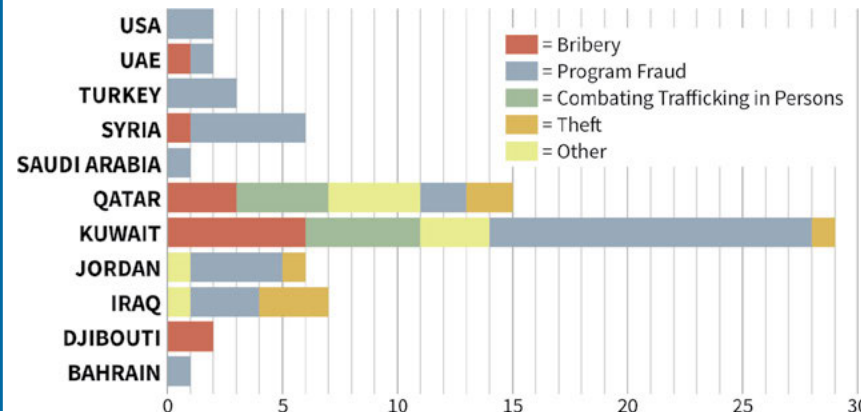
Q1 FY 2018 RESULTS

Arrests	—
Criminal Charges	—
Criminal Convictions	—
Savings/Recoveries	\$2,634,367
Suspensions/Debarments	7
Job Terminations	2
Personnel Actions	6
Other Administrative	8

Q1 FY 2018 BRIEFINGS

No. of Briefings	17
No. of Attendees	211

PRIMARY OFFENSE LOCATIONS



*Some investigations are joint with more than one agency and some not joint with any other agency. Therefore, the total number of Joint Open Cases may not equal the total number of Open Cases. Open Cases as of 12/31/2017. **Note:** Cumulative since 1/1/2015.

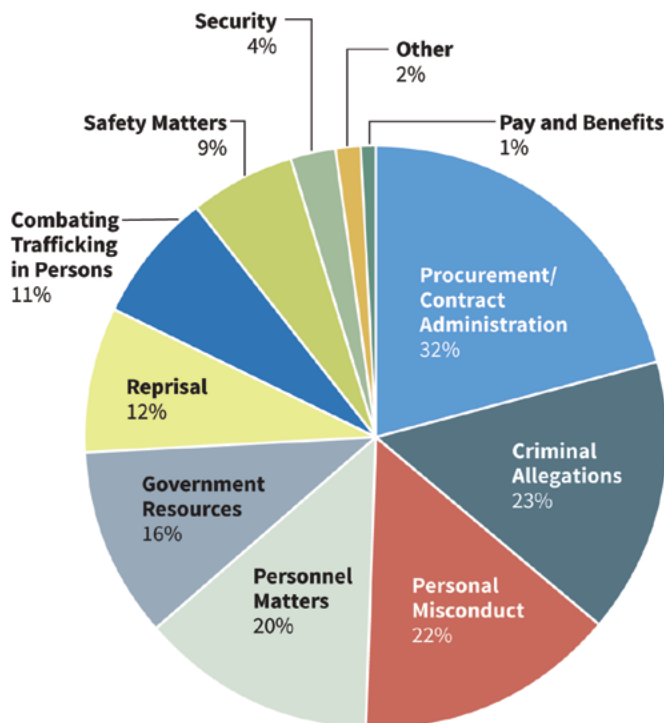
USAID OIG INVESTIGATORS PRESENT AT FOURTH SYRIA INVESTIGATIONS WORKING GROUP

In November 2017, representatives from USAID OIG attended the fourth meeting of the Syria Investigations Working Group in Glasgow, Scotland, hosted by the United Kingdom’s Department for International Development. Representatives from DoS OIG, investigators from eight UN agencies, four bilateral donors, and the International Federation of the Red Cross also attended the meeting. Attendees exchanged information on ongoing investigations related to assistance and stabilization programs in Syria and Iraq. The meeting included briefings by USAID OIG, the United Kingdom’s Department for International Development, Office of U.S. Foreign Disaster Assistance, Mercy Corps, and the United Nations Development Programme. USAID OIG investigators presented information on their investigations related to corruption affecting Iraq stabilization programs and cross border programs into Syria.

HOTLINE ACTIVITY

Each Lead IG agency maintains its own hotline to receive complaints and contacts specific to its agency. The OIGs’ hotlines provide a confidential, reliable means for individuals to report violations of law, rule, or regulation; mismanagement; gross waste of funds; and abuse of authority for independent review.

Figure 3.
Hotline Activity



The OIG hotline representatives process the complaints they receive and refer these complaints to the appropriate entity in accordance with their respective protocols. Any hotline complaint that merits referral is sent to the responsible organization for investigation or informational purposes.

The DoD OIG employs an investigator to coordinate the hotline contacts received among the Lead IG agencies and others, as appropriate. During the reporting period, the investigator received and coordinated numerous complaints, which subsequently resulted in the opening of 57 cases. Not all complaints lead to an open case. The cases were referred within the DoD OIG and the Service IG entities. Some complaints include numerous allegations that result in multiple cases.

As noted in Figure 3, the majority of the complaints received during this quarter related to personal misconduct, criminal allegations, reprisal, procurement or contract administration irregularities, and other personnel matters.





A U.S. Air Force A-10 Thunderbolt shoots flares off after receiving fuel from a KC-10 Extender. (U.S. Air Force photo)

ONGOING AND PLANNED OVERSIGHT ACTIVITIES

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ONGOING AND PLANNED OVERSIGHT ACTIVITIES

This section of the report discusses the ongoing Lead IG strategic planning process as well as ongoing and planned audit, inspection, and evaluation work. The ongoing and planned oversight projects, as of December 31, 2017, are listed in separate tables.

STRATEGIC PLANNING

Pursuant to Section 8L of the Inspector General Act, the Lead IG is required to develop and carry out a joint strategic plan to guide comprehensive oversight of programs and operations for each OCO. 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. To maximize the effectiveness of each plan, it is updated annually and submitted to Congress.

The Overseas Contingency Operations Joint Planning Group Meets Quarterly

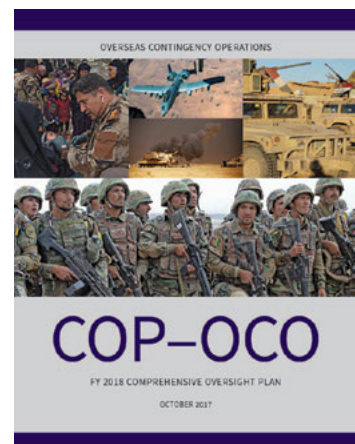
The Overseas Contingency Operations Joint Planning Group, which began in 2008, informs the planning activities and coordinates projects among oversight entities. It serves as a primary venue to coordinate audits, inspections, and evaluations throughout Southwest Asia, including Iraq, Syria, and Afghanistan. The group is a forum for information sharing and coordination of the broader Federal oversight community, including the Military Service IGs and Service audit agencies, the GAO, and OIGs from the Departments of Justice, Treasury, and Homeland Security.

In October 2017, the DoD OIG hosted the 40th quarterly Overseas Contingency Operations Joint Planning Group Meeting. The guest speaker for the event was Jessica Powers, Deputy Director of the Defeat ISIS Core Task Force. Ms. Powers discussed the role of the task force and its charter to coordinate strategy within the interagency and provide an update on the progress implementing the plan to defeat ISIS.

Lead IG Planning Summit

In December 2017, the DoD OIG hosted a Lead IG Planning Summit. Participants discussed the development of the FY 2019 Comprehensive Oversight Plan for Overseas Contingency Operations (COP-OCO). The first portion of the summit focused on OIR while the second portion focused on OFS. Participants from each of the Lead IG agencies discussed the definition of an OCO project, lessons identified from the FY 2018 COP-OCO development process, OCO oversight project typology and gaps, strategic oversight areas, and proposed out-of-cycle FY 2018 oversight projects.

**FY 2018
Comprehensive
Oversight Plan
for Overseas
Contingency
Operations**



FY 2018 Oversight Plan

Starting in late 2014, upon designation of the Lead IG for OIR, the three Lead IG agencies began developing and carrying out a joint strategic plan for comprehensive oversight of OIR. The FY 2018 Joint Strategic Oversight Plan for Operation Inherent Resolve, effective October 1, 2017, was included in the FY 2018 Comprehensive Oversight Plan for Overseas Contingency Operations. The plan organized OIR-related oversight projects into strategic oversight areas (SOAs), updated to reflect the evolving OIR mission areas as follows:

SECURITY

Security focuses on determining the degree to which OIR is accomplishing its mission to defeat ISIS by training, advising, and assisting the ISF and vetted Syrian opposition forces, and conducting counterterrorism operations. Activities that fall under this SOA include the following:

- Countering illegal combatants and criminal elements.
- Supporting host-nation military and police, including the Iraqi Army, federal and local police, the CTS, border guard forces, tribal holding forces, the SDF, and Kurdish forces.
- Providing equipment and enablers that support targeting and air operations against ISIS and affiliates.
- Protecting key personnel and facilities.

GOVERNANCE AND CIVIL SOCIETY

Governance and Civil Society focuses on the ability of the host-nation government, at all levels, to represent and serve its citizens. Activities that fall under this SOA may include the following:

- Building or enhancing those nations' governance capacity, including the capacity to pay for their activities and services.
- Promoting inclusive and effective democracy, and civil participation and empowerment.
- Promoting reconciliation, peaceful conflict resolution, demobilization and reintegration of armed forces, and other rule of law efforts.
- Fostering sustainable and appropriate economic development activities.
- Fostering fair distribution of resources and provision of essential services.
- Countering and reducing corruption, inequality, and extremism.

STABILIZATION

Stabilization focuses on U.S. Government efforts to enable persons affected by the OCO to return to or remain in their homes with the expectation of basic security and government and public services. Activities that fall under this SOA include the following:

- Removing explosive remnants of war.
- Providing security forces acceptable to local populations.
- Repairing infrastructure and buildings.
- Reestablishing utilities and public services.
- Reestablishing local governance structures and supporting reconciliation.
- Setting conditions for resumption of basic commerce.
- Planning for the provision of humanitarian assistance.

SUPPORT TO MISSION

Support to Mission focuses on administrative, logistical, and management efforts that enable the United States to conduct military operations, empower host-nation governance, and provide humanitarian assistance to the local population. Activities that fall under this SOA may include the following:

- Security of U.S. personnel and property on U.S. installations.
- Occupational health and safety of personnel on U.S. installations.
- Logistical support to U.S. installations.
- Grant and contract management.
- Program administration.

HUMANITARIAN ASSISTANCE

Humanitarian Assistance focuses on aid intended to save lives, alleviate suffering, and maintain human dignity during and after conflict, as well as to prevent and strengthen preparedness for such crises. Distinct and separate from military operations, activities that fall under this SOA may include the following:

- Protection.
- Water, sanitation, and hygiene.
- Emergency food assistance.
- Relief commodities.
- Shelter.
- Healthcare.
- Education.

- Emergency livelihoods.
- Economic recovery.
- Social cohesion.
- Coordination of related logistics.

ONGOING OVERSIGHT ACTIVITIES

As of December 31, 2017, the Lead IG agencies and their partner agencies had 52 ongoing projects related to OIR. Figure 4 describes the ongoing projects by strategic oversight area. Tables 5 and 6 list the project title and objective for each of these projects. Some projects are related to more than one SOA.

Security

The DoD OIG is evaluating an intelligence-related program related to the airborne intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance processing, exploitation and dissemination process for OIR.

The DoS OIG is auditing the Bureau of International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs Aviation program.

The Air Force Audit Agency is auditing aviation fuels management.

GAO is conducting three ongoing projects on advise-and-assist lessons learned, Special Operations Forces operations tempo, and the disposition of selected U.S. assistance to Iraq's security forces.

The DoJ OIG is reviewing efforts to protect seaports and maritime activities and efforts to address homegrown violent extremists. It is also auditing the Bureau of Prisons' counterterrorism efforts.

The DHS OIG is auditing and evaluating of the Transportation Security Agency, U.S. Customs and Border Protection, and U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement of the homeland security and aviation security programs.

Governance and Civil Society

There are no ongoing oversight projects for the governance and civil society strategic oversight area.

Humanitarian Assistance

The DoS OIG is auditing assistance to internally displaced persons in Iraq.

USAID OIG is auditing selected obligations and costs incurred under USAID’s OCOs relating to USAID’s humanitarian assistance in Syria and neighboring USAID OIG is also performing a follow-up audit of Syrian implementers under investigation.

Stabilization

The DoD OIG is evaluating programs to train, advise, and assist Iraqi hold forces in support of stabilization operations.

USAID OIG is auditing USAID’s assistance to public international organizations.

Support to Mission

The DoD OIG is auditing OIR-related contracts and U.S. Air Force C-5 Galaxy readiness, and management and controls over Army equipment in Kuwait and Qatar. The DoD OIG is also evaluating the DoD’s efforts to combat trafficking in persons at DoD facilities in Kuwait.

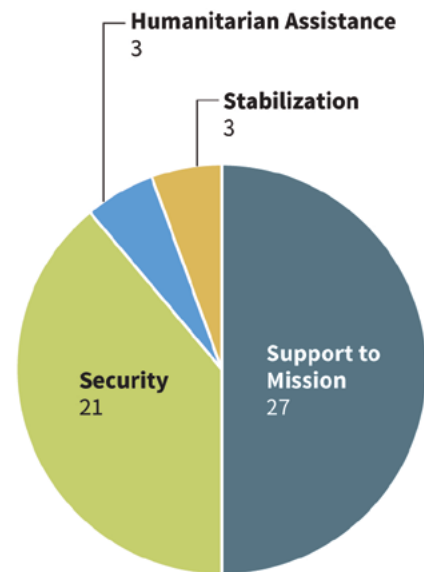
The DoS OIG is auditing 1) fuel acquisition and distribution for U.S. diplomatic facilities in Jordan; 2) the invoice review process for overseas contingency operations contracts within the Bureau of International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs; 3) the Bureau of International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs’ Aviation program; 4) and the Worldwide Protective Services task orders for Iraq.

The Air Force Audit Agency is auditing contingency allowance equipment; emergency contingency allowance equipment; and contract administration in a contingency environment.

The Army Audit Agency is auditing the Army’s reporting of obligations and expenditures for OIR; overtime pay and entitlements for deployed civilians; and the Deployable Disbursing System.

GAO is reporting on the use of overseas contingency operation funding for “base” budget requirements.

Figure 4.
Ongoing Projects per Strategic Oversight Area



Note: Projects may focus on more than one SOA; therefore, totals do not represent a one-to-one correlation with the count of total projects.

Table 5.

Ongoing Oversight Projects by Lead IG Agencies, as of December 31, 2017

Project Title	Objective
DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE OFFICE OF INSPECTOR GENERAL	
<i>Audit of the Military Sealift Command's Maintenance of Prepositioning Ships</i>	To determine whether the Military Sealift Command ensured that prepositioning ships received required maintenance.
<i>Evaluation of Airborne Intelligence Surveillance Reconnaissance Processing, Exploitation, and Dissemination Process for OIR</i>	To evaluate whether the OIR Commander's intelligence requirements are being satisfied by the current airborne intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance processing, exploitation, and dissemination process.
<i>Evaluation of the Syria Train and Equip Program (Phase II)</i>	To evaluate the Syria Train and Equip Program's compliance with provisions authorized under the 2015 National Defense Authorization Act, Section 1209 and determine the validity of a DoD Office of Inspector General Hotline complaint.
<i>Evaluation of U.S. and Coalition Efforts to Train, Advise, Assist, and Equip an Iraqi Police Hold Force in Support of Stability Operations</i>	To assess the U.S. and Coalition efforts to train, advise, assist, and equip Iraqi Police Hold Force in support of stability operations.
<i>Audit of DoD Components Integration of Operational Contract Support</i>	To determine whether the combatant commands have effectively integrated operational contracting support into ongoing operations.
<i>Audit of Controls Over the Disposition of Equipment at the Defense Logistics Agency Disposition Services in Kuwait</i>	To determine whether the Defense Logistics Agency Disposition Services is properly disposing of equipment at Camp Arifjan in Kuwait.
<i>Audit of Defense Information Technology Contracting Organization Contract Awards</i>	To determine whether the Defense Information Technology Contracting Organization is properly awarding telecommunication contracts.
<i>Audit of Base Support Contracts in Bahrain</i>	To determine whether the United States Navy is providing effective oversight of the base support services contracts in Bahrain.
<i>Audit of the Trans-Africa Airlift Support Contract</i>	To determine whether the DoD components effectively developed requirements for the Trans-Africa Airlift Support Contract.
<i>Audit of Management of Army Equipment in Kuwait and Qatar</i>	To determine whether the Army is effectively managing equipment in Kuwait and Qatar.
<i>Evaluation of DoD Efforts to Combat Trafficking in Persons at DoD Facilities in Kuwait</i>	To determine whether DoD contracts in Kuwait comply with combating trafficking-in-persons requirements in statutes, the Federal Acquisition Regulation, Defense Acquisition Regulations System, and other DoD guidance and if DoD officials are providing effective oversight in accordance with command responsibility and contracting regulations, including taking measures to address any instances of non-compliance.
<i>Audit of U.S. Air Force C-5 Galaxy Readiness</i>	To determine if the U.S. Air Force C-5 squadrons have adequate mission capable aircraft and training to support U.S. Transportation Command readiness mission requirements.

Project Title	Objective
DEPARTMENT OF STATE OFFICE OF INSPECTOR GENERAL	
<i>Audit of the Bureau of International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs Aviation Program</i>	To determine whether the Bureau of International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs is administering its aviation program, including key internal controls such as inventory management, aviation asset usage, aircraft maintenance and asset disposal, in accordance with Federal requirements and Department guidelines.
<i>Audit of Assistance to Internally Displaced Persons in Iraq</i>	To determine whether the Bureau of Population, Migration, and Refugees has effective controls in place to ensure that U.S. funds provided for internally displaced persons in Iraq are used for their intended purposes.
<i>Audit of Jordan Fuel Acquisition and Distribution</i>	To determine whether fuel acquisition, storage, and distribution are performed in accordance with contract terms and Federal regulations and whether the Bureau of Near Eastern Affairs is adhering to policies and procedures to ensure the safety and security of Embassy Amman personnel.
<i>Audit of the Invoice Review Process for Overseas Contingency Operations Contracts—Bureau of International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs</i>	To determine whether invoice review policies and procedures, training, staffing, invoice review practices, and accountability measures are sufficient to support overseas contingency operations and ensure invoice payments are reviewed in accordance with Federal requirements and departmental guidance.
<i>Audit of Worldwide Protective Services Task Orders for Iraq and South Sudan</i>	To determine whether the Bureau of Diplomatic Security's management and oversight of the Triple Canopy task order is being conducted in accordance with Federal and departmental regulations and guidelines.
U.S. AGENCY FOR INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT OFFICE OF INSPECTOR GENERAL	
<i>Audit of Selected Obligations and Costs Incurred Under USAID's Overseas Contingency Operations Relating to USAID's Humanitarian Assistance in Syria and Neighboring Countries</i>	To determine whether USAID awarded, obligated, modified, monitored, and reported funds according to established requirements and the costs incurred were supported, allowable, allocable, and reasonable in accordance with established requirements and award provisions.
<i>Follow-up Audit of Syrian Implementers Under Investigation</i>	To determine what corrective actions the selected Syria-response implementers have taken to remedy internal control weaknesses identified by investigations; and if USAID eliminated oversight gaps identified by investigations of the selected Syria-response implementer.
<i>Audit of USAID's Assistance to Public International Organizations</i>	To determine 1) what assessment of risk USAID offices are conducting before awarding funds to public international organizations; 2) how the risks associated with awards to these organizations are mitigated; 3) how public international organization programs and funds are overseen by USAID offices; and 4) if other vulnerabilities exist with USAID assistance provided to public international organizations, notwithstanding currently established policies and procedures.
<i>Audit of USAID/Iraq's Stabilization Activities Implemented by United National Development Programme</i>	To determine the extent to which completed stabilization projects, such as rebuilt hospitals, clinics, and schools, have been used as intended.

Table 6.

Ongoing Oversight Projects by Lead IG Partner Agencies, as of December 31, 2017

Project Title	Objective
AIR FORCE AUDIT AGENCY	
<i>Aviation Fuels Management</i>	To determine whether Wing personnel properly managed aviation fuels. Specifically, the team will determine whether personnel properly accounted for aviation fuels transactions and computed inflight-refueling requirements.
<i>Aviation Fuels Management, 386th Air Expeditionary Wing</i>	To determine whether Wing personnel properly managed aviation fuels. Specifically, the team will determine whether personnel properly accounted for aviation fuels transactions and computed inflight-refueling requirements.
<i>Aviation Fuels Management, 379th Air Expeditionary Wing</i>	To determine whether Wing personnel properly managed emergency contingency allowance equipment.
<i>Aviation Fuels Management, 380th Air Expeditionary Wing</i>	To determine whether Wing personnel properly managed aviation fuels. Specifically, to determine whether personnel properly accounted for aviation fuels transactions and computed inflight-refueling requirements.
<i>Contingency Allowance Equipment, 332nd Air Expeditionary Wing</i>	To determine whether Wing personnel properly managed emergency contingency allowance equipment.
<i>Emergency Contingency Allowance Equipment</i>	To determine whether Air Force personnel properly managed emergency contingency allowance equipment.
<i>Contract Administration in a Contingency Environment, 386th Air Expeditionary Wing</i>	To determine whether Wing personnel managed contract activities in its area of responsibility in accordance with guidance. Specifically, to evaluate whether personnel 1) properly planned, competed, and awarded contingency contracts, including the trafficking in persons clause; 2) provided oversight and quality assurance over contractor performance, including trafficking in persons; and 3) appropriately responded to potential violations.
<i>Emergency Contingency Allowance Equipment, 386th Air Expeditionary Wing</i>	To determine whether Wing personnel properly managed emergency contingency allowance equipment.
<i>Emergency Contingency Allowance Equipment, 379th Air Expeditionary Wing</i>	To determine whether Wing personnel properly managed emergency contingency allowance equipment.
<i>Contract Administration in a Contingency Environment, 379th Air Expeditionary Wing</i>	To determine whether Wing personnel properly managed contract activities in its area of responsibility in accordance with guidance. Specifically, the team will evaluate whether personnel 1) properly planned, competed, and awarded contingency contracts, including the trafficking in persons clause; 2) provided oversight and quality assurance over contractor performance, including the trafficking in persons clause; and 3) appropriately responded to potential violations.

Project Title	Objective
<i>Contract Administration in a Contingency Environment</i>	To determine whether Wing personnel properly managed contract activities in its area of responsibility in accordance with guidance. Specifically, evaluate whether personnel 1) properly planned, competed, and awarded contingency contracts (including trafficking in persons clause); 2) provided oversight and quality assurance over contractor performance (including trafficking in persons); and 3) appropriately responded to potential trafficking in persons violations.
ARMY AUDIT AGENCY	
<i>Audit of the Army’s Reporting of Obligations and Expenditures for OIR</i>	To determine whether 1) Air Force personnel effectively managed the security program at the U.S. Air Forces Central Command locations; and 2) classified storage areas and computer systems were properly protected and access to classified data was limited to those personnel with appropriate level clearances.
<i>Audit of Overtime Pay and Entitlements for Deployed Civilians</i>	To verify that overtime was effectively managed and downrange entitlements (to include danger and post-differential pay) were accurately paid for civilians deployed in support of OFS and OIR.
<i>Audit of the Deployable Disbursing System</i>	To verify that Deployable Disbursing System transactions were controlled, supported, and accurately recorded and users were properly trained.
DEPARTMENT OF HOMELAND SECURITY OFFICE OF INSPECTOR GENERAL	
<i>TSA’s Prevention of Terrorism Through its Foreign Repair Station Inspections</i>	To determine whether Transportation Security Administration’s current inspection process effectively identifies and mitigates aircraft tampering risks and how it works with the Department of Transportation’s Federal Aviation Administration at foreign repair stations that TSA cannot inspect.
<i>CBP’s Global Entry Program</i>	To determine to what extent CBP monitors Global Entry participants to ensure their continuous vetting and eligibility redetermination.
<i>U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement’s Screening of Aliens from Specially Designated Countries</i>	To determine whether U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement ensures the proper screening of aliens from specially designated countries.
<i>Audit of Information Technology Security Controls over Cargo Areas at Airports and Ports</i>	To determine how DHS has implemented computer security controls for their systems in the cargo areas at U.S. airports and ports.
<i>U.S. Customs and Border Protection’s Searches of Electronic Devices</i>	To determine whether U.S. Customs and Border Protection is conducting searches of electronic devices at or between United States ports of entry according to required procedures.
<i>Access Control and Security Identification Display Area Badge Covert Testing</i>	To determine whether the Transportation Security Administration implements effective requirements and procedures to safeguard the sterile areas of U.S. airports.

Project Title	Objective
<i>Audit of DHS Air Support in the Rio Grande Valley</i>	To determine whether the U.S. Customs and Border Protection receives required air support in the Rio Grande Valley.
<i>FAMS' – International Flight Operations</i>	To evaluate the methodology for FAMS' international flight coverage and the capabilities for interdicting improvised explosive devices.
<i>Transportation Worker Identification Credential</i>	To evaluate the Coast Guard's oversight of Transportation Worker Identification Credential enforcement for regulated vessels and facilities.
DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE OFFICE OF INSPECTOR GENERAL	
<i>Efforts to Protect Seaports and Maritime Activity</i>	To review the FBI's roles and responsibilities for 1) assessing maritime terrorism threats; 2) preventing and responding to maritime terrorist incidents; and 3) coordinating with the DHS components to ensure seaport security.
<i>Efforts to Address Homegrown Violent Extremists</i>	To 1) review the FBI's homegrown violent extremist casework and resource management; 2) evaluate the FBI's coordination with relevant components and its strategic and tactical policies and processes to identify and address threats; and 3) assess the FBI field divisions' implementation of strategic and tactical policies and processes to investigate homegrown violent extremist threats.
<i>Audit of the Bureau of Prison's Counterterrorism Efforts</i>	To review the Bureau of Prison's policies, procedures, and practices for monitoring inmates with known or suspected ties to domestic and foreign terrorism and its efforts to prevent further radicalization among its inmate population.
GOVERNMENT ACCOUNTABILITY OFFICE	
<i>Institutionalizing Advise-and-Assist Lessons Learned</i>	To evaluate the extent to which the DoD has 1) modified its approach for planning for, training, and utilizing U.S. military personnel to advise and assist partner forces based on lessons learned from advise-and-assist efforts in Afghanistan, Iraq, and Syria; 2) incorporated lessons learned from challenges the DoD has faced in providing and utilizing U.S. military personnel to carry out their assigned advise-and-assist missions in support of geographic combatant commands; 3) incorporated lessons learned from past challenges they have experienced in providing key enablers for the advise-and-assist missions, including air support; intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance; logistics; or other enabling capabilities; and 4) assessed and institutionalized specific lessons from OIR, OFS, and other past and present advise-and-assist missions in various geographic combatant commands to identify and implement necessary changes to doctrine, training, and force structure to support ongoing and future advise-and-assist missions.

Project Title	Objective
<i>Special Operations Forces Operational Tempo</i>	To determine 1) what challenges, if any, the DoD has faced in providing special operations forces to meet the requirements of the geographic combatant commands; 2) the extent the DoD considers the operational tempo in prioritizing and tasking special operations forces deployments in support of CENTCOM operations, including determining tradeoffs between conventional and special operations forces capabilities and the requirements of other geographic combatant commands; 3) what challenges, if any, the DoD has faced in providing deployed special operations forces with key enablers including, but not limited to, airlift, medical evacuation, intelligence, expeditionary base operating support, logistics, and airfield operations; 4) the extent to which the DoD has assessed the impact of special operations forces mission and deployment rates on unit readiness and the availability of special operations forces to conduct other missions and support the requirements of other geographic combatant commands; and 5) the extent to which the reliance on OCO funding has impacted the readiness of special operations forces and how will it continue to impact special operations forces if funding isn't shifted to the base defense budget in future years.
<i>Disposition of Selected U.S. Assistance to Iraq's Security Forces</i>	To determine 1) what policies and procedures are in place to ensure the accountability, physical security, and end use of U.S.-provided equipment through the Iraq Train and Equip Fund after transfer to the government of Iraq, Kurdistan Regional government, and to what extent are these policies and procedures being carried out; 2) what is known about the location and use of equipment provided through the Iraq Train and Equip Fund after transfer; and 3) what controls are in place to ensure the accountability of Iraq Train and Equip Fund-funded cash transfers to the government of Iraq, Kurdistan Regional government, and other recipients.
<i>Vendor Vetting</i>	To determine 1) the extent to which the DoD and its geographic combatant commands have developed guidance on vendor vetting; 2) the extent to which the DoD and its geographic combatant commands have established and are implementing vendor-vetting processes, including information systems involved in vendor vetting; 3) the extent to which the DoD and its geographic combatant commands have internal controls in place to ensure that the information used to make determinations of vendor risk, including appeals processes is complete, accurate, and timely, and available to vendors; and 4) the challenges, if any, the DoD is facing regarding vendor vetting.

Project Title	Objective
<i>Contingency Funds for Base Needs</i>	To determine the extent to which the DoD tracks its obligation of OCO funds used for base requirements and how OCO funds were authorized for base requirements in FY 2016.
NAVAL AUDIT SERVICE	
<i>Audit of the Department of the Navy Overseas Contingency Operations</i>	To verify the Department of the Navy's obligations and disbursements supporting overseas contingency operations comply with applicable laws and regulations and internal controls were in place and functioning as intended.

PLANNED OVERSIGHT ACTIVITIES

As of December 31, 2017, the Lead IG agencies and their partner agencies had 33 planned oversight projects related to OIR. The discussion that follows highlights some of these planned projects by oversight area. Some projects related to more than one SOA. Tables 7 and 8 provide the project title and objective for each of the planned projects.

Security

The DoD OIG will evaluate four Intelligence-related programs including social media exploitation for OIR, the DoD's end-use monitoring of equipment provided through the Iraq Train and Equip Fund, and remote explosives detection capabilities. DoD OIG will also audit DoD's oversight of private security contracts at Balad Air Base in Iraq.

The DoS OIG will audit of grants and cooperative agreements to counter violent extremism in the Middle East.

The Department of the Treasury OIG will audit the Office of Foreign Assets Control's management of the counterterrorism sanctions program and will survey Treasury's coordination within the ISIS Integrated Mission Team.

Governance and Civil Society

The DoS OIG will inspect the Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor. The DoS OIG will also audit DoS policies and oversight of Iraq's post-conflict development and sustainment. The DoS OIG will also inspect DoS governance and stabilization programs in Iraq and Syria funded under the Further Continuing and Security Assistance Appropriations Act, 2017.

Humanitarian Assistance

The DoS OIG will perform a follow-up review of DoS oversight of assistance provided in Syria and an audit of assistance to internally displaced persons in Iraq.

USAID OIG will audit the Bureau for Democracy, Conflict, and Humanitarian Assistance oversight during a humanitarian crisis.

Stabilization

The DoD OIG will audit the DoD plan for reconstruction and stabilization in Iraq.

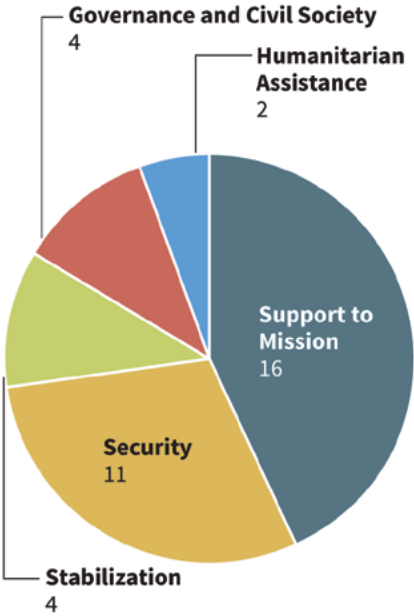
Support to Mission

The DoD OIG will evaluate military facilities, theater linguist support for OIR and OFS; property management and reporting of DoD Government-furnished equipment; and OIR-related contracts.

Naval Audit Services will audit Department of the Navy financial data reported for overseas contingency operations.

The DoS OIG will audit fuel acquisition and distribution in Jordan and Turkey, the Aviation Working Capital Fund Cost Center, Baghdad Life Support Services food safety contracts, logistics and freight forwarding operations contracts, the Diplomatic Security’s invoice-review process in the Middle East, and various construction projects.

Figure 5.
Planned Projects per Strategic Oversight Area



Note: Projects may focus on more than one SOA; therefore, totals do not represent a one-to-one correlation with the count of total projects.

Table 7.

Planned Oversight Projects by Lead IG Agencies, as of December 31, 2017

Project Title	Objective
DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE OFFICE OF INSPECTOR GENERAL	
<i>Evaluation of the DoD End-Use Monitoring of Equipment Provided to the Iraqi Army Through the Iraq Train and Equip Fund</i>	To determine how the DoD conducts end-use monitoring of Iraq train and equip-funded equipment provided to the Iraqi Army and whether such monitoring is effective.
<i>Evaluation of Compartmented Geospatial Intel Collection for OIR Intelligence Requirements</i>	To determine whether compartmented geospatial intelligence collection is being effectively used to satisfy existing collection gaps in OIR intelligence requirements.
<i>Evaluation of DoD Biometric-Enabled Intelligence Operations for OIR</i>	To determine whether biometric-enabled intelligence effectively supports the OIR Commander's requirements.
<i>Summary Report of Recommendations from OCO Intelligence Evaluations</i>	To determine whether recommendations from the DoD IG for OCO intelligence evaluations affecting OIR and OFS have been implemented.
<i>Evaluation of Social Media Exploitation for OIR</i>	To determine whether the DoD is effectively employing social media analytics in support of OIR.
<i>Evaluation of Remote Explosives Detection Capability</i>	To determine whether the Defense Intelligence Agency and the National Geospatial-Intelligence Agency are providing appropriate specialized capabilities to remotely detect homemade explosives in accordance with DoD regulations.
<i>Evaluation of Under Secretary of Defense (Intelligence) and Defense Intelligence Agency Oversight of Special Intelligence Interrogation Methods</i>	To determine whether the Under Secretary of Defense (Intelligence) and the Defense Intelligence Agency, are overseeing special intelligence interrogation methods in accordance with DoD policy.
<i>Audit of DoD Oversight of Private Security Contracts at Balad Air Base in Iraq</i>	To determine whether the DoD is providing effective oversight of private security contracts at Balad Air Base in Iraq.
<i>Audit of the DoD Plan for Reconstruction and Stabilization in Iraq</i>	To determine whether the DoD and the DoS effectively planned and coordinated for stabilization efforts in Iraq and Syria.
<i>U.S. Military Facility Evaluation—Ahmad Al Jaber Air Base, Kuwait</i>	To determine whether U.S. military-occupied facilities in Kuwait comply with DoD health and safety policies and standards regarding electrical distribution, fire protection, and fuel systems. Additionally, to determine the validity of a DoD OIG Hotline complaint related to Ahmad Al Jaber Air Base.
<i>Evaluation of Theater Linguist Support for OIR and OFS</i>	To review policies and procedures affecting the recruitment, hiring, and employment of military and contract linguists on the conduct of the OIR and OFS.
<i>Audit of DoD Integration of Operational Contract Support into Force Development and Training</i>	To determine whether the DoD effectively integrated operational contract support into force development and training.

Project Title	Objective
<i>Audit of the Award and Administration of the U.S. Army Intelligence and Security Command DoD Language Interpretation and Translation II Contract</i>	To determine whether the U.S. Army Intelligence and Security Command DoD Language Interpretation and Translation II contracts and task orders were properly awarded and administered.
<i>Audit of Property Management and Reporting of DoD Government-Furnished Equipment</i>	To determine whether the DoD has policies and procedures in place to accurately account for government-furnished equipment in accordance with generally accepted accounting standards.
DEPARTMENT OF STATE OFFICE OF INSPECTOR GENERAL	
<i>Audit of Grants and Cooperative Agreements to Counter Violent Extremism in the Middle East</i>	To determine whether the DoS has developed goals and objectives for its strategy to counter violent extremism and monitored funds provided to support those objectives.
<i>Audit of Diplomatic Security's Invoice-Review Process—Middle East</i>	To determine whether the Bureau of Diplomatic Security's invoice-review policies and procedures, training, staffing, and invoice-review practices and accountability measures are sufficient to support OCOs and ensure invoice payments are reviewed in accordance with Federal requirements and departmental guidance.
<i>Inspection of the Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor</i>	To inspect the overall programs and operations of the Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor.
<i>Audit of Baghdad Life Support Services Food Operations/ Cost Controls for BLiSS Food Services</i>	To determine whether the contractor complied with BLiSS contract requirements, the Federal Acquisition Regulations, the Foreign Affairs Manual, and Foreign Affairs Handbook.
<i>Audit of DoD Policies for Iraq's Post-Conflict Development and Sustainment</i>	To determine whether the DoS has policies in place to ensure that its post-conflict foreign assistance program in Iraq are sustained
<i>Inspection of DoS Governance and Stabilization Programs in Iraq and Syria Funded under the Further Continuing and Security Assistance Appropriations Act, 2017</i>	To determine whether the DoS has effectively deployed funds made available under the Further Continuing and Security Assistance Appropriations Act, 2017, to support governance and stabilization efforts in Iraq and Syria.
<i>Follow-up Review of DoS Oversight Assistance Provided in Syria</i>	To determine whether the DoS implemented actions to address the deficiencies identified in a prior DoS OIG report.
<i>Audit of Turkey Fuel Acquisition and Distribution</i>	To determine whether fuel acquisition, storage, and distribution are performed in accordance with contract terms, Federal regulations, and the DoS is adhering to policies and procedures to ensure the safety and security of post personnel.
<i>Audit of New Consulate Construction—Erbil, Iraq</i>	To determine whether the Bureau of Overseas Building Operations has effective quality assurance processes in place to ensure that the contractor builds the Erbil Consulate to the specifications agreed to in the contract.
<i>Audit of Baghdad Life Support Services Food Safety</i>	To determine whether the BLiSS risk areas in food operations such as cost, food handling, and safety meet the contract requirements of the Federal Acquisition Regulations, Foreign Affairs Manual, and Foreign Affairs Handbook.

Project Title	Objective
<i>Audit of Aviation Working Capital Fund Cost Center</i>	To determine whether the fees collected by the Aviation Working Capital Fund cost center were sufficient to cover all costs required to sustain operations in Iraq and Afghanistan.
<i>Audit of DoS Selection and Management of Contracting Officer's Representatives in Iraq</i>	To determine whether 1) the contracting officer's representative nomination and selection process for Iraq considered qualified candidates as required by Federal and departmental requirements and 2) the management structure of contracting officer's representatives in Iraq allows for effective supervision and accountability for executing their responsibilities.
<i>Audit of Embassy Baghdad Power Plant Construction Cost Increases</i>	To determine the reasons for cost increases for the construction of the Embassy Baghdad power plant, whether any cost increases were supported with required documentation, and whether DoS oversight and management of the project complied with relevant guidance.
<i>Audit of Logistics and Freight Operations Provided by Pacific Architects and Engineers, Inc., in Iraq</i>	To determine whether 1) logistics and freight operations are being conducted in accordance with acquisition regulations and DoS policies, 2) are being monitored by the DoS, and 3) include fair and reasonable prices.
<i>Audit of the DoS Armored Vehicle Procurement Process</i>	To determine whether DoS contractors providing armoring services complied with contract terms and conditions.
U.S. AGENCY FOR INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT OFFICE OF INSPECTOR GENERAL	
<i>Audit of the USAID Bureau for Democracy, Conflict, and Humanitarian Assistance's Oversight During a Humanitarian Crisis</i>	To examine the roles of the Bureau for Democracy, Conflict, and Humanitarian Assistance and its independent offices in conducting oversight and their effectiveness at monitoring and addressing program implementation.

Table 8.

Planned Oversight Projects by Lead IG Partner Agencies, as of December 31, 2017

Project Title	Objective
DEPARTMENT OF THE TREASURY OFFICE OF INSPECTOR GENERAL	
<i>Office of Foreign Assets Control Management of the Counterterrorism Sanctions Program</i>	To determine whether Office of Foreign Assets Control's Counterterrorism Sanctions program complies with applicable laws, regulations, and Office of Foreign Assets Control officials properly document and approve program decisions and deliberations.
<i>Survey of Treasury's Coordination within the ISIS Integrated Mission Team</i>	To understand the ISIS Integrated Mission Team's mission and the collaboration amongst participants and how the Integrated Mission Team is assisting in developing Treasury's plan to disrupt ISIS's financing.
NAVAL AUDIT SERVICE	
<i>Department of the Navy Financial Data Reported for Overseas Contingency Operations</i>	To verify the accuracy of the Department of the Navy's obligations and disbursements supporting overseas contingency operations as reported in the <i>Cost of War</i> report.





A Philippine soldier stands in the Marawi battle zone.
(Stars and Stripes/Seth Robson photo)

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OPERATION PACIFIC EAGLE-PHILIPPINES

On September 1, 2017, Secretary of Defense Mattis designated Operation Pacific Eagle-Philippines (OPE-P) as a contingency operation. OPE-P is described as the comprehensive counterterrorism campaign by the DoD, in coordination with other U.S. Government agencies and international partners, to support the Philippine government and military in their efforts to isolate, degrade, and defeat Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS) affiliates and other terrorist organizations in the Philippines.¹

On November 16, pursuant to Section 8L of the Inspector General Act of 1978, the Chair of the Council of the Inspectors General on Integrity and Efficiency designated the Department of Defense Inspector General (DoD IG) the Lead IG for OPE-P. Section 8L requires the naming of a Lead IG for any Overseas Contingency Operation (OCO) that exceeds 60 days. The law requires the Lead IG to be chosen from among the three listed IGs: the DoD IG, the Department of State (DoS) IG, and the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) IG. As the Lead IG, the DoD IG is responsible for ensuring comprehensive, whole-of-government oversight of the OCO under a strategic plan developed jointly with the DoS and USAID IGs, and for coordinating with other government oversight agencies.² On November 27, the DoD IG appointed the DoS IG as Associate Inspector General for OPE-P.³ The USAID IG also participates in the oversight planning for OPE-P.

An acronym for the Islamic State group in Iraq and Syria is seen spray-painted on a building in the Philippine city of Marawi. (Special to Stars and Stripes/ Crisostomo Ang photo)

The ability of ISIS-P to seize the city of Marawi, a provincial capital, and hold it for 4 months demonstrated a new level of organization and capacity for violence for the Philippine militant groups operating under the ISIS banner.

In addition to oversight coordination, Section 8L requires the Lead IG “to submit to Congress on a quarterly basis, and to make available on an Internet website available to the public, a report on the contingency operation.”⁴ Given the size and scope of OPE-P at this time and its relationship to the global fight against ISIS and its affiliates, the Lead IG has included this quarter’s report on OPE-P in the quarterly report on OIR.

THE OPE-P MISSION

According to DoD officials, OPE-P is a comprehensive campaign to assist the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) in their fight against violent extremist organizations, including those affiliated with ISIS (collectively referred to as ISIS-Philippines or ISIS-P) and other terrorist groups that do not profess a connection to ISIS. The DoD did not provide an anticipated end date for OPE-P, stating that the operation was conditions-based and will terminate when the AFP no longer requires U.S. military assistance to address its internal terrorist threat.⁵

DoD officials stated that OPE-P was designated as an OCO to acknowledge the severity of the terrorist threat facing the Philippines. The ability of ISIS-P to seize the city of Marawi, a provincial capital, and hold it for 4 months demonstrated a new level of organization and capacity for violence for the Philippine militant groups operating under the ISIS banner. This heightened threat caused the DoD to prioritize resources to halt and reverse the degradation of an already unstable area and prevent the southern Philippines from becoming a safe haven for terrorists.⁶ According to the Wall Street Journal, U.S. Ambassador to the Philippines Sung Y. Kim said that the operation “indicate[s] recognition in Washington that a greater degree of attention is required for the situation in Mindanao.”⁷

While the OCO designation placed a greater emphasis on the counterterrorism mission in the Philippines, DoD officials said that it had not significantly altered the way in which U.S. forces already in country operate nor has it resulted in an increased U.S. military presence.⁸ According to media reports, there were between 200 and 300 U.S. troops serving in advisory roles in the Philippines as of January 2018, and DoD officials said those numbers were unlikely to change in the near future.⁹

Under OPE-P, the U.S. special operations mission continues to be one of advising and assisting the AFP. According to the DoD, all military operations are conducted by, with, and through the Philippine forces. In addition to advisors in the field, U.S. Pacific Command (PACOM) provides the AFP with logistical support; intelligence sharing; operational planning; and intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance. DoD officials reported that PACOM was seeking to provide casualty evacuation capability; facilities improvement and expansion; and additional intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance resources.¹⁰ DoS officials also stated that their activities in the Philippines have not changed in any significant manner as a result of the designation of OPE-P.¹¹

OPE-P is a bilateral operation, and DoD officials stated there were no plans to expand the effort into a “coalition.”¹² The Combined Joint Task Force-OIR is geographically limited to Iraq and Syria, and it plays no role in the Philippines.¹³ Australia was the only other

country actively participating in counterterrorism operations in the Philippines. Support from the Australian Defence Force included a commitment made on September 8, 2017, to deploy up to 80 mobile training teams to the Philippines. While there was no trilateral security arrangement, U.S. and Australian forces coordinated efforts with each other through their preexisting bilateral channels.¹⁴

Other nations maintained their own bilateral security relationships with the Philippine government. Indonesia, Malaysia, Singapore, and New Zealand were reportedly in discussions with the Philippine government regarding potential military assistance, but none had concluded a Visiting Forces Agreement as of January 10, 2018. While China and Russia donated military hardware, neither played a direct role in supporting the Philippine government's counterterrorism mission.¹⁵

While China and Russia donated military hardware, neither played a direct role in supporting the Philippine government's counterterrorism mission.

FUNDING FOR OPE-P

In FY 2017, the DoD supported activities under OPE-P with \$16 million from the Intelligence, Surveillance, and Reconnaissance Transfer Fund, according to the DoD Comptroller. The DoD did not include dedicated funding for OPE-P in its FY 2018 budget request or the budget amendment submitted in November 2017, since the DoD had not yet finalized its operational requirements for OPE-P nor completed its formal review of the use of OCO funding prior to the submission of these budget documents. The DoD, including PACOM and the Military Departments, are identifying requirements and resourcing options to support OPE-P in FYs 2018 and 2019.¹⁶

The Office of Management and Budget, in collaboration with the DoD, establishes the criteria for determining whether defense expenditures properly belong under base budget or OCO appropriations. The current OCO criteria, most recently updated in 2010, include a list of geographic areas where OCO funds may be used. While the Philippines was included in this list, the DoD ended its prior counterterrorism mission there, Operation Enduring Freedom-Philippines, in 2015. Following the termination of that operation, the joint position of the Office of Management and Budget and DoD was that the Philippines was no longer an eligible location for the use of OCO funding. According to the DoD Comptroller, discussions regarding proposed revisions to the existing OCO criteria continued this quarter, and the DoD's pending FY 2019 budget request will include the details of the amount and source of funding for counterterrorism operations in the Philippines.¹⁷

BACKGROUND AND OPERATIONS

The Emergence of ISIS-P and Battle for Marawi

The Philippines, a predominantly Roman Catholic island nation in Southeast Asia, has historically struggled with violent extremist separatist groups in the country's predominantly Muslim south. Since ISIS's declaration of a "caliphate" in 2014, several of the Philippines' militant Islamist groups declared allegiance to ISIS.¹⁸ Most prominent



A camp for displaced Muslims whose homes were destroyed during the battle to liberate Marawi stands just outside the Philippine city. (Stars and Stripes/Seth Robson photo)

among these new ISIS affiliates was the Abu Sayyaf Group (ASG). Established in the early 1990s, ASG has fought for an independent Islamic state on the southern island of Mindanao and the Sulu archipelago for a quarter century.¹⁹ Shortly after its formation and before declaring for ISIS, ASG affiliated and coordinated with Al Qaeda. ASG's association with Al Qaeda included visits to the Philippines by senior Al Qaeda leaders, such as Khalid Sheikh Mohamed and Ramzi Yousef.²⁰ In a report on global terrorism in 2016, the DoS identified ASG as the most violent terrorist group in the Philippines.²¹

In May 2017, ASG and other jihadist groups operating as ISIS-P attacked and occupied Marawi, a city of over 200,000 people on the island of Mindanao. These militants reportedly borrowed tactics employed by their ISIS associates in Mosul, Iraq, using sniper fire, hostages for protective cover, and tunnel networks to avoid detection. Their ranks included foreign fighters from Malaysia, Indonesia, Saudi Arabia, Pakistan, and other countries. According to a Philippine military official, these fighters were better armed than previous Philippine jihadists, employing high-powered weapons, night vision goggles, and surveillance unmanned aerial vehicles.²²

Months of heavy urban combat and aerial bombardment devastated Marawi's infrastructure, which Philippine Secretary of National Defense Delfin Lorenzana estimated will cost nearly \$2 billion to rebuild.²³ Secretary Lorenzana declared the fighting over on October 23, a week after Philippine forces killed Isnilon Hapilon, the leader of the ASG and operational commander of ISIS-P in Marawi. The raid that resulted in the death of Hapilon also eliminated Omar Maute, leader and co-founder of another ISIS affiliate known as the Maute Group, and Mahmud Ahmad, a Malaysian terrorist financier who served as a link to ISIS in Syria.²⁴ DoD officials stated that Hapilon's death disrupted ISIS-P's operations, though the various ISIS affiliated groups were attempting to reconstitute elsewhere.²⁵

A senior DoD official stated in an interview that an assessment of the strength of a group like ISIS must account for both its organizational robustness and the power of its brand. The AFP dealt a significant blow to ISIS-P in Marawi, killing or capturing nearly 1,000 militants, and ultimately regained control of the city through heavy urban combat. However, the official cautioned that despite the AFP's ultimate victory in Marawi, ISIS-P's demonstrated ability to seize and hold a major city for several months bolstered the ISIS brand in the Philippines, which the group may use to attract new membership locally and financial support from abroad.²⁶

While Marawi was liberated from ISIS-P this quarter, residents were not yet permitted to return to the city center, which was severely damaged by the fighting. In areas where residents were allowed to return, many found their homes and businesses looted, destroyed, and smeared with pro-ISIS graffiti. Approximately 200,000 residents were displaced, either in camps or living with family outside of Marawi.²⁷ (For more on the humanitarian crisis and response, see page 104.)

While Marawi was liberated from ISIS-P this quarter, residents were not yet permitted to return to the city center, which was severely damaged by the fighting.

Martial Law Extended

In response to the ISIS-P overthrow of Marawi, the Philippine government placed the entire island of Mindanao under martial law in May 2017. In December, the Philippine Congress, at the request of President Rodrigo Duterte, extended martial law for an additional year. According to President Duterte, this was necessary to ensure “the total eradication” of militancy on Mindanao.²⁸ A presidential spokesperson said that the extension of martial law was needed to fight “the communist terrorists and their coddlers, supporters, and financiers” and to ensure the rehabilitation of Marawi.²⁹

Secretary Lorenzana stated that while the city has been liberated, militancy was spreading into the surrounding areas, adding “there might not be fighting in Marawi anymore, but there are still clashes almost every day in other parts of Mindanao.”³⁰ Without addressing the issue of martial law, DoD officials concurred with the assessment that despite the removal of ISIS-P from Marawi, other violent extremist organizations across the southern Philippines had pledged allegiance to ISIS and were attempting to reconstitute.³¹

Stagnant Peace Process Threatens Stability

The Moro Islamic Liberation Front, a large militant group with a violent history in the Philippines, concluded a landmark peace agreement with the government in 2014. Despite its past actions, this organization has since urged other Islamists to lay down their arms in the interest of advancing the terms of the ceasefire, which include plans to establish an autonomous Muslim region in the country's south.³² The Front led a counterterrorism task force on Mindanao and supported the AFP's counterterrorism mission with rescue and humanitarian efforts following ISIS-P's assault on Marawi. According to media reports, the group also helped prevent the conflict from spreading to neighboring towns.³³

Despite the promise of greater autonomy for the Muslim-populated areas of the Philippines, some members of the Front grew disenchanted with the slow pace of the peace process and left the group to join ISIS-P. Abu Turaife, a former guerrilla commander for the Front, broke with the organization and now leads a pro-ISIS militant group. Moro Islamic Liberation Front defectors, trained fighters with access to stockpiles of weapons, represent a significant challenge to the peace process and a key source of strength for ISIS-P.³⁴

While the leadership of the Front and other groups remained supportive of negotiations for an autonomous Muslim region, a former chair of the Philippines Peace Panel cautioned that the longer the peace process is delayed, the greater the threat of instability and unrest on Mindanao. She cautioned that if the negotiations failed to demonstrate results, Muslim groups that have come to the table will struggle to hold their ranks as discouraged members break off and take up arms with the violent extremists.³⁵

U.S.-Philippine Bilateral Relations

The United States has maintained diplomatic relations with the Philippines since it gained independence in 1946. According to DoS officials, the priorities of the U.S. Embassy in Manila include efforts to promote democracy, safeguard human rights, advance the economic interests of both countries, facilitate peaceful resolutions to conflicts, and generally represent the government and people of the United States.³⁶

According to DoD officials, any U.S. military presence in the Philippines is governed by the 1952 Mutual Defense Treaty and the 1998 Visiting Forces Agreement. While permanent basing of foreign military forces is prohibited by the Constitution of the Philippines, the 2014 Enhanced Defense Cooperation Agreement permits extended temporary deployments of U.S. troops to support the AFP in a robust bilateral defense relationship, of which counterterrorism operations are just one component. DoD officials stated that as with all U.S. military operations in the Philippines, OPE-P is conducted at the request of the Philippine government. U.S. and Philippine military leaders meet annually at the 4-star level to discuss the scope of the coming year's bilateral defense cooperation and training.³⁷

During this quarter, the DoS continued to lead diplomatic and foreign assistance counterterrorism capacity-building efforts, including programs to support civilian law enforcement, address cyber threats, identify vulnerable groups, and prevent radicalization. These efforts were not specific to ISIS or OPE-P. The U.S. Embassy in Manila also supported interagency counterterrorism efforts, including security assistance, such as building the AFP's capacity and arranging the supply of U.S. military equipment.³⁸

While the DoS reports regularly on the status of the peace process between the Philippine government and groups such as the Moro Islamic Liberation Front, no reconciliation or discussions were underway with ISIS-P as of this quarter. The Philippine government has not invited the DoS to participate in or support efforts to reconcile with ISIS affiliated groups or to stabilize or rehabilitate territory liberated from ISIS-P.³⁹

In an interview this quarter, a senior DoD official described how the bilateral relationship between the United States and the Philippines informs the scope of military operations. The U.S. and Philippine military establishments have worked together for over 70 years and even more closely since the attacks of September 11, 2001. However, given the history between the two countries, the official noted that U.S. policy was particularly sensitive toward Philippine sovereignty. He emphasized that the U.S. special operations mission was to support the Philippine forces, working by, with, and through their partners in support of common interests.⁴⁰

President Duterte publicly announced a “separation from the United States” in 2016, but his government has continued to welcome U.S. military assistance in its counterterrorism fight. Anti-American politics notwithstanding, the Philippine military establishment generally holds a favorable view of the United States.⁴¹ According to a senior DoD official, most AFP officers received training either in the United States or by U.S. forces in the Philippines, which has built a foundation of both institutional cooperation and personal bonds between senior military leaders from both countries.⁴²

HUMANITARIAN ASSISTANCE

The USAID Mission in the Philippines (USAID/Philippines) stated that most of the agency’s programming this quarter was targeted at care for and reintegration of IDPs.⁴³ According to the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), the crisis in Marawi displaced an estimated 98 percent of the city’s total population of over 200,000 residents. IDPs were forced to stay with relatives outside of the city or relocate to various evacuation centers. The economic impact of the conflict also created significant population displacement throughout the surrounding towns and villages in the province of Lanao del Sur and the neighboring province of Lanao del Norte.⁴⁴

In total, nearly 354,000 individuals on Mindanao were displaced, with an estimated 95 percent living with host families or in community-based shelters.⁴⁵ The remaining 5 percent of IDPs resided in the 44 evacuation centers that were in operation as of November 29, 2017.⁴⁶ Of the 354,000 registered IDPs, the Philippine government reported that approximately 97,000 (24.6 percent) had returned to Marawi as of December 10, 2017. However, basic services inside the city were not yet sufficient to sustain a fuller return of IDPs. Many of the IDP returnees were only partial, with dependent family members staying with host families and in evacuation centers. While the government began facilitating phased, voluntary returns to less-affected areas of the city this quarter, it restricted returns of IDPs to the most impacted villages and neighborhoods because of significant damage to living facilities and ongoing safety concerns.⁴⁷

The UNHCR reported that some IDPs, after attempting to return home, had gone back to the areas to which they had previously been displaced. This trend was reportedly due to their safety fears, inadequate access to water, and limited work opportunities, and inability to obtain IDP entitlements due to problems registering with UNHCR. The Philippine government faced challenges in the registration of host family IDPs and verification of personal identification because IDPs were dispersed across a wide area and, in many cases, IDPs left their identification documents behind when they fled the fighting. The UNHCR also reported that inequitable

aid distribution between IDPs in evacuation centers and those in host communities caused concerns, as did a lack of mechanisms through which IDPs could report grievances.⁴⁸

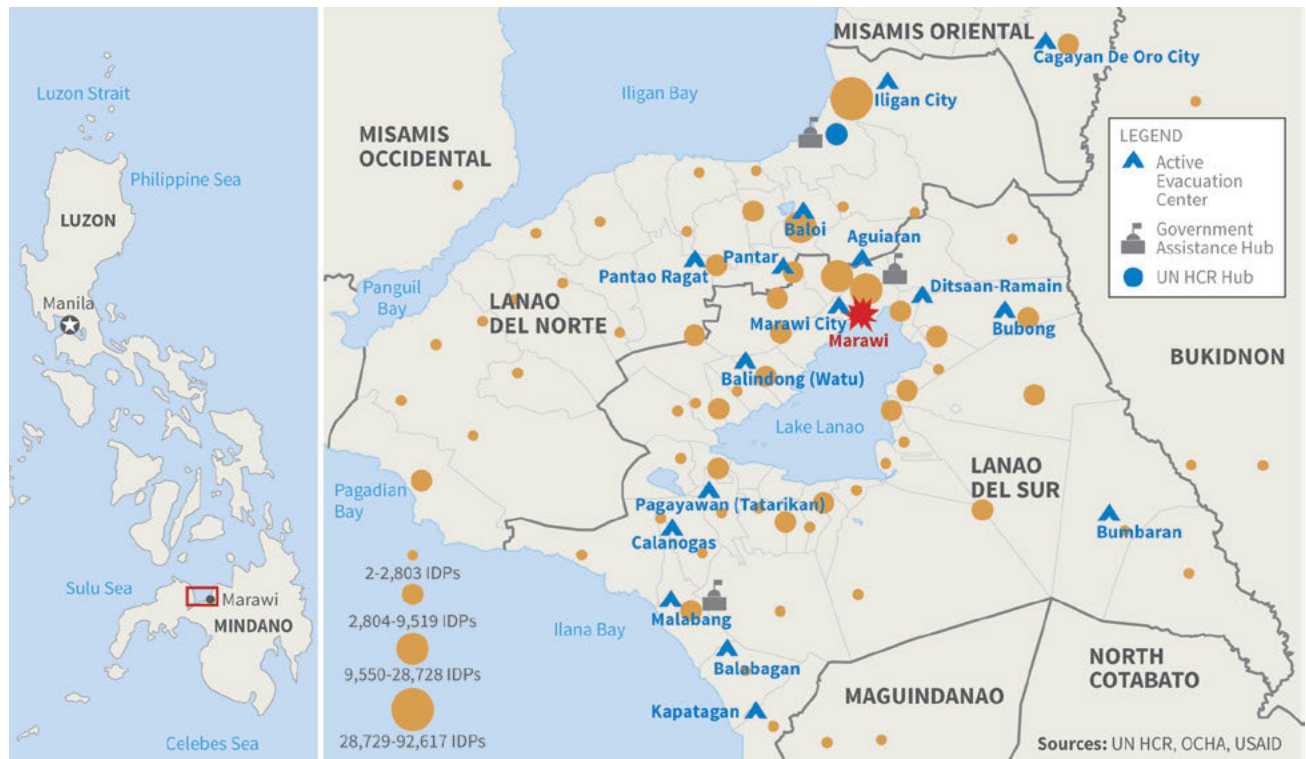
The protracted displacement and limited work opportunities for IDPs have reduced their income by as much as 40 percent, according to UN World Food Programme (WFP). In late October, a WFP assessment determined that 29 percent of the IDPs were severely or moderately food insecure. For 40 percent of households, spending on food was their largest expense, and the WFP found acute malnutrition in 8 percent of IDP children screened.⁴⁹

Host families also required assistance to offset the costs associated with supporting home-based IDPs, according to UNHCR. In some cases, IDPs claimed to have been denied assistance due to registration problems. These problems created risks for IDPs, including the potential for sexual exploitation. A December 2017 report by the Child Protection Working Group cited an increase in the number of teenage marriages in IDP locations, a potential indicator that these impacts were already being felt.⁵⁰

USAID noted that humanitarian assistance providers indicated that IDPs in evacuation centers and host communities were living in crowded conditions and lacked sufficient access to basic services, including latrine maintenance and hygiene supplies. An estimated 9,500 families from the main battle area of Marawi are expected to be displaced for years to come.

Figure 6.

Displacement Due to Marawi Crisis, as of December 8, 2017



The government is building 1,700 transitional shelters, with 674 units expected to be available by February, leaving a significant gap in immediate need.⁵¹

USAID committed \$20.9 million to assist directly with ongoing emergency relief operations and the longer term recovery and rehabilitation of Marawi city and the surrounding areas. This includes \$3 million in humanitarian assistance through USAID's Office of U.S. Foreign Disaster Assistance (OFDA), which leads and coordinates the U.S. Government's humanitarian assistance mission in the Philippines. Funding also includes \$10 million in FY 2017 Complex Crisis Funds to sustain the return and reintegration of IDPs back into affected areas in and around Marawi; \$1.3 million through USAID/Philippines for health activities; and \$6 million to support new and ongoing programs for countering violent extremism on Mindanao.⁵²

USAID officials reported providing assistance to help IDPs and returnees gain access to protection, shelter, and water, sanitation, and hygiene services. Other OFDA assistance included helping IDPs obtain Philippine government-issued identification cards, which allowed them to apply for other government benefits. USAID also supported humanitarian coordination between the Bangon Marawi Task Force (an interagency task force led by the Philippine Department of National Defense), other Philippine government authorities, UN agencies, and non-governmental organizations through support for the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs.

USAID reported providing logistics and supplies to restore access to potable water, mobilize health personnel, and strengthen the capacity of local health departments, including the training of health workers and medical personnel on tuberculosis prevention, care, and treatment. In addition, USAID supported the WFP in assisting the Philippine government to store, transport, and deliver emergency food assistance and other relief commodities to affected populations.⁵³ For an overview of the IDP situation resulting from the conflict in Marawi, see Figure 7.

OPE-P OVERSIGHT ACTIVITIES

As of December 31, 2017, the Lead IG agencies had one ongoing and one planned oversight project related to OPE-P.

Table 9.

Project Title	Objective
DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE OFFICE OF INSPECTOR GENERAL	
<i>Audit of the Philippines Operations Support Contract</i> (Ongoing)	To determine whether PACOM and subordinate commands developed, reviewed, and validated requirements for the Philippines Operations Support Contract to ensure the adequate provision of services.
<i>Assessment of Security Cooperation Program in the Philippines</i> (Planned)	To evaluate DoD, PACOM, and allied efforts to build and sustain the AFP capability to defeat and deny safe haven to violent extremist organizations in the Philippines.





An F-22 receives fuel over the Euphrates River, Iraq. (U.S. Air Force photo)

APPENDICES

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APPENDIX A

Methodology for Preparing Lead IG Quarterly Report

This report is issued pursuant to sections 2, 4, and 8L of the Inspector General Act of 1978, which requires that the designated Lead IG provide a quarterly report, available to the public, on an overseas contingency operation. The DoD Inspector General is the designated Lead Inspector General for OIR. The DoS Inspector General is the Associate Lead Inspector General for OIR. This report contains information from the three Lead IG agencies—DoD OIG, DoS OIG, and USAID OIG—as well as from partner oversight agencies. This unclassified report covers the period from October 1 through December 31, 2017.

To fulfill its congressional mandate to produce a quarterly report on OIR, the Lead IG gathers data and information from Federal agencies and open sources. Data and information used in this report are attributed to their source in endnotes to the text or notes to the tables and figures. Except for references to Lead IG and oversight partner agency audits, inspections, evaluations, or investigations in the report, the Lead IG has not independently verified and assessed all the data included in this report. The humanitarian assistance section is based on public UN documents, and information provided by USAID and the DoS

Data Call

Each quarter, the Lead IG agencies direct a series of questions, or data calls, to agencies about their programs and operations related to OIR. The Lead IG agencies use the information provided by their respective agencies for quarterly reports and to determine where to conduct future audits and evaluations. The agencies that responded to the data call for this quarter included the following:

- Department of Defense
- Department of State
- U.S. Agency for International Development
- Department of Homeland Security OIG
- Department of Justice OIG
- Department of the Treasury OIG

Open-Source Research

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

- Information publicly released by U.S. agencies
- Congressional testimony
- Press conferences, especially DoD and DoS Briefings
- UN (and relevant branches)
- Reports issued by non-governmental or research organizations
- Media reports

Materials collected through open source research also provide information to describe the status of OIR, and help the Lead IG agencies assess information provided in their respective agency data call. However, in light of the operational realities and dynamic nature of OIR, the Lead IG agencies have limited time and ability to test, verify, and independently assess the assertions made by these agencies or open sources. This is particularly true where the Lead IG agencies have not yet provided oversight of these assertions through audits, inspections, or evaluations.

Report Production

The Lead IG is responsible for assembling and producing this report. The DoD OIG coordinates with the DoS OIG and the USAID OIG, which draft sections of the report related to the activities of their agencies. Each Lead IG agency participates in reviewing and editing the entire quarterly report.

The DoD OIG, DoS OIG, and USAID OIG provide the agencies who have responded to the data call with two opportunities to verify and comment on the content of the report. During the first review, agencies are asked to correct any inaccuracies and provide additional documentation. The Lead IG incorporates agency comments, where appropriate, and sends the report back to the agencies for a final review for accuracy. Each OIG coordinates the review process with its own agency.



A U.S. Air Force F-16C Fighting Falcon releases a flare while conducting air patrols and possible air strikes in Iraqi and Syrian airspace. (U.S. Air Force Photo)

APPENDIX B

Department of Justice Prosecutions

Since 2013, Federal prosecutors have publicly charged approximately 120 individuals for foreign terrorist fighter, homegrown violent extremism, or ISIS-related conduct. DoJ prosecutions resulted in people being sentenced, convicted, or pleading guilty during the reporting. Examples from DoJ are:

- On December 4, 2017, in the Southern District of Texas, Asher Abid Khan, 23, of Spring, Texas, pleaded guilty to providing material support to ISIS. Khan and his friend devised a plan to travel to Turkey and then to Syria to fight on behalf of ISIS.
- On December 18, 2017, in the Eastern District of Virginia, a federal jury convicted Nicholas Young of attempting to provide material support to ISIS and obstruction of justice. According to court records, Young attempted to purchase and send gift card codes that he believed would allow ISIS recruiters to communicate securely with potential ISIS recruits.
- On December 19, 2017, David Daoud Wright, 28, was sentenced to 28 years in prison and a lifetime of supervised release following his conviction for conspiracy to provide material support to ISIS, conspiracy to commit acts of terrorism transcending national boundaries, conspiracy to obstruct justice, and obstruction of justice. Beginning in at least February 2015, Wright began discussing ISIS' call to kill non-believers in the United States with his uncle, Usaamah Abdullah Rahim, and co-defendant Nicholas Alexander Rovinski. In September 2016, Rovinski pleaded guilty to providing material support to ISIS and was sentenced on December 20, 2017, to 15 years in prison.



U.S. Marine advisors conduct a mid-mission brief, during their key leader engagement mission with Iraqi Security Forces leaders, near al Qaim, Iraq. (U.S. Army photo)

APPENDIX C

Treasury's Actions Against Terrorist Finances

The Department of Treasury has global terrorism authorities to target activities of extremist groups, including ISIS. Treasury's Office of Terrorism and Financial Intelligence and Office of Foreign Assets Control disrupt the ability of terrorist organizations to fund their operations.

Treasury officials reported the following notable events that took place this quarter:

On October 25, 2017, pursuant to Executive Order (E.O.) 13224, Treasury designated eight individuals and one entity for acting for or on behalf of ISIS in Yemen (ISIS-Y), or al Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP), or both. This action was taken in partnership with the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, as the co-chair of the recently established Terrorist Financing Targeting Center (TFTC), as well as all other TFTC member states: the Kingdom of Bahrain, the State of Kuwait, the Sultanate of Oman, the State of Qatar, and the United Arab Emirates. The following seven individuals and one entity were designated on October 25, 2017, for acting on behalf of ISIS-Y:

- **Adil Abduh Fari Uthman al-Dhubhani**—As of early June 2016, Fari served with ISIS-Y in Taiz Governorate, Yemen, where his deputies, along with a large number of other ISIS-Y fighters, fought under the Sunni resistance. Fari also made payments to various Sunni militants and ISIS-Y affiliates in Taiz Governorate to secure continued support for ISIS-Y activities in Taiz in late October 2016. Recently, he has conducted fundraising for AQAP in his role as a military instructor.
- **Radwan Muhammad Husayn Ali Qanan**—As of mid-2017, Qanan was a key ISIS-Y leader in Aden Governorate, Yemen, deputy field commander for ISIS-Y, and also a regional ISIS-Y field commander in southern Yemen. In late 2015, Qanan was one of the most senior officials within ISIS-Y and was operating in Aden, Yemen. He was considered to be one of the most dangerous members of ISIS-Y who intended to target and kidnap foreigners. As of early 2016, he was an ISIS-Y leader responsible for assassination operations in Yemen and also received funds from multiple sources in support of his role as a senior leader.
- **Khalid al-Marfadi**—As of mid-2017, al-Marfadi was an ISIS-Y leader in charge of the movements of ISIS-Y fighters. He gave orders to the ISIS-Y commander of operations and was involved in an ISIS-Y assassination cell targeting Yemeni security forces located in southern Yemen. Between 2015 and 2016, al-Marfadi was the ISIS-Y leader of Yafa, Yemen, was involved in the recruitment of fighters from Yafa for ISIS-Y, and ran a training camp in Yafa. He was in charge of and prepared the vehicle-borne IED used by ISIS-Y. Al-Marfadi was one of the individuals responsible for, or had advance knowledge of the majority of ISIS-Y attacks in Yemen. He was considered to be a decision-maker within ISIS-Y and conducted many functions on behalf of the group. He had approximately 50-60 ISIS-Y fighters working for him in Lahij Governorate.
- **Sayf Abdulrab Salem al-Hayashi**—In mid-2015, al-Hayashi facilitated a weapons deal on behalf of ISIS-Y. Since 2016, he has been a weapons dealer and financier of AQAP.
- **Al Khayr Supermarket**—Supermarket is owned or controlled by al-Hayashi.
- **Abu Sulayman al-Adani**—As of early March 2017, al-Adani was the overall head of ISIS-Y, who was reportedly nominated in 2013 by Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi. The State Department designated al-Baghdadi as a Specially Designated Global Terrorist pursuant to E.O. 13224 on October 4, 2011.

- **Nashwan al-Wali al-Yafi'i**—As of early 2017, al-Yafi'i was a finance leader of ISIS-Y. As of late 2016, he served as an ISIS-Y militant and chief financial officer for ISIS-Y in Yafi'i District, Lahij Governorate, Yemen. Al-Yafi'i reported directly to ISIS-Y leader Khalid al-Marfadi, also designated on October 25, 2017.
- **Khalid Sa'id Ghabish al-Ubaydi**—As of early 2017, Ghabish transported and secured shipments of smuggled weapons to ISIS-Y's secret locations and storage depots. As of late 2016, he was one of the most senior ISIS-Y members in al Ghaydah, al Mahrah Governorate, Yemen and was an ISIS-Y leader in Hadramawt Governorate, Yemen. In 2014, he recruited youths to support ISIS-Y.

On December 5, 2017, Treasury designated Abdullah Ibrahim al-Faisal, a Jamaica-based Islamic cleric, as a Specially Designated Global Terrorist pursuant to E.O. 13224 for assisting in, sponsoring, or providing financial, material, or technological support for, or other services to or in support of ISIS. In 2016, Faisal assisted one of his followers in identifying a funding source to travel to ISIS-controlled territory. In addition to his actions for ISIS, Faisal has directly or indirectly influenced numerous terrorists.

A U.S. Marine assists Iraqi partner forces by reinforcing a tactical assembly area. (U.S. Marine Corps photo)



ACRONYMS AND DEFINITIONS

Acronym	Definition
AFP	Armed Forces of the Philippines
AQ	Al Qaeda
AQAP	Al Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula
AQIM	Al Qaeda in the Islamic Magreb
AQIS	Al Qaeda in the Indian Subcontinent
AQS	Al Qaeda in Syria
ASG	Abu Sayyaf Group
CENTCOM	U.S. Central Command
CIGIE	Council of Inspectors General on Integrity and Efficiency
COP-OCO	Comprehensive Oversight Plan for Overseas Contingency Operations
CTEG	Counter-ISIS Train and Equip Fund
CTS	Counter Terrorism Service (Iraqi)
DCIS	Defense Criminal Investigative Service
DHS	U.S. Department of Homeland Security
DoD OIG	Department of Defense Office of the Inspector General
DoJ	U.S. Department of Justice
DoS OIG	Department of State Office of Inspector General
ERD	Emergency Response Division (Iraqi)
FAMS	Federal Air Marshal Service
FBI	Federal Bureau of Investigation
FEMA	Federal Emergency Management Agency
FFP	U.S. Aid for International Development, Office of Food for Peace
FFS	Funding Facility for Stabilization
FMF	Foreign Military Financing
FY	Fiscal Year
GAO	Government Accountability Office
HTS	Hayat Tahrir al Sham
IDP	Internally displaced person
IED	Improvised explosive device
IKR	Iraq Kurdistan Region
IMF	International Monetary Fund
IOM	International Organization for Migration
IRGC	Iranian Revolutionary Guard Corps

Acronym	Definition
ISF	Iraqi Security Forces
ISIS	Islamic State of Iraq and Syria
ISIS-P	ISIS-Philippines
ISIS-Y	ISIS-Yemen
JN	Jabhat al Nusrah
KRG	Kurdistan Regional Government
Lead IG	Lead Inspector General
Lead IG agencies	Refers to DoD OIG, DoS OIG, and USAID OIG agencies
MaT	Mughawir al Thawra
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organization
OCO	Overseas Contingency Operation
OFDA	U.S. Aid for International Development, Office of U.S. Foreign Disaster Assistance
OFS	Operation Freedom's Sentinel
OIR	Operation Inherent Resolve
OPE-P	Operation Pacific Eagle-Philippines
PACOM	U.S. Pacific Command
PKK	Kurdistan Workers' Party (Turkish)
PMF	Popular Mobilization Forces
PRM	Department of State, Bureau of Population, Refugees, and Migration
PYD	Democratic Union Party (Kurdish)
SAC	Syrian Arab Coalition
SOA	Strategic Oversight Area
SDF	Syrian Democratic Forces
TCI	Triple Canopy Inc.
TFTC	Terrorist Financing Targeting Center
Treasury	U.S. Department of the Treasury
UN	United Nations
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNHCR	UN High Commissioner for Refugees
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
USAID OIG	U.S. Agency for International Development Office of Inspector General
WFP	United Nations World Food Programme
YPG	Kurdish People's Protection Units

ENDNOTES

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U.S. Sailors man a security watch aboard the aircraft carrier USS Nimitz as the ship returns to its homeport from the Indo-Asia-Pacific region and Arabian Gulf which supported OIR and numerous multi-national exercise. (U.S. Navy photo)

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