



OPERATION INHERENT RESOLVE

LEAD INSPECTOR GENERAL REPORT TO THE UNITED STATES CONGRESS



JANUARY 1, 2022–MARCH 31, 2022

ABOUT THIS REPORT

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

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

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

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

METHODOLOGY

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

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

CLASSIFIED APPENDIX

A classified appendix to this report provides additional information on Operation Inherent Resolve. This quarter's classified appendix will be delivered to relevant agencies and congressional committees.

FOREWORD

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

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

This quarterly report describes the activities of the U.S. Government in support of OIR, as well as the work of the Department of Defense, the Department of State, and the U.S. Agency for International Development to promote the U.S. Government's policy goals in Iraq and Syria, during the period January 1 through March 31, 2022.

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

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



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

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



Handwritten signature of Diana Shaw in black ink.

Diana Shaw
Senior Official Performing the
Duties of the Inspector General
U.S. Department of State



Handwritten signature of Thomas J. Ullom in black ink.

Thomas J. Ullom
Acting Inspector General
U.S. Agency for International
Development



On the Cover

(Top row): Coils of razor wire sit at Al Asad Air Base, Iraq (U.S. Army photo); a U.S. Soldier drives a M2A3 Bradley Fighting Vehicle (U.S. Air National Guard photo); Ministry of Peshmerga soldiers participate in a graduation ceremony in Erbil, Iraq (U.S. Army photo); Syrian Democratic Forces participate in a live-fire exercise (U.S. Army photo). (Bottom row): An Iraqi SU-25 ground attack jet at Al Asad Air Base, Iraq (U.S. Army photo).

MESSAGE FROM THE LEAD INSPECTOR GENERAL



Sean W. O'Donnell

I am pleased to present this Lead IG quarterly report on Operation Inherent Resolve (OIR). The mission of OIR is to advise, assist, and enable local partner forces until they can independently defeat ISIS in designated areas of Iraq and Syria, thereby setting conditions for the implementation of long-term security cooperation frameworks.

In January, ISIS attacked a detention facility in Syria, demonstrating that while ISIS is degraded, it retains the ability to launch complex attacks. The Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF), which run the facility, were able to repel the attack and recapture many detainees, but only with significant Coalition ground and air support. While the SDF conducted some independent counter-ISIS operations during the quarter, they continued to rely on the Coalition for critical intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance (ISR) support. At times, forces aligned with the Syrian regime, Iran, Russia, and Turkey distracted some SDF leadership attention during the quarter, but the SDF remained committed to the defeat ISIS mission.

In Iraq, the Iraqi Security Forces (ISF) continued to make incremental progress towards operational independence, according to their Coalition advisors. While the ISF have the air power and ISR that the SDF lack, they do not use it effectively, often turning to the Coalition to provide this support. During the quarter, the protracted government formation process—which entered its 6th month—dominated Iraqi politics and delayed government reform efforts. Iran and Iran-aligned militias limited their attacks to preserve leverage during the government formation process, but continued to threaten U.S. and Coalition forces.

The defeat ISIS mission depends, in part, on addressing basic needs for food, water, and shelter; repatriating and reintegrating thousands of displaced Iraqis and Syrians; and strengthening economic opportunity and hope across the region. The Russian invasion of Ukraine exacerbated dire economic and humanitarian conditions in Syria and Iraq. The disrupted supply of wheat and other food staples led to increased food prices in both countries, higher costs for humanitarian organizations in Syria, and street protests in Iraq. The Department of State and USAID continued to support stabilization and humanitarian activities in the two countries.

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



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



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Syrian Democratic Forces participate in a live-fire exercise. (U.S. Army photo)

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Left: A U.S. Army M2A3 Bradley Fighting Vehicle fires an anti-tank missile during a live-fire exercise in Syria. (U.S. Army photo)



Right: ISIS fighters surrender after their attack on Ghuwayran Detention Facility. (SDF Twitter feed)

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Operation Inherent Resolve (OIR) mission is to advise, assist, and enable partner forces until they can independently defeat ISIS in designated areas of Iraq and Syria, in order to set conditions for long-term security cooperation frameworks.¹ This effort includes supporting the Iraqi government and vetted Syrian partners with civilian-led stabilization and humanitarian activities.²

The ISIS attack on Ghuwayran Detention Facility in Syria exposed the group's persistent will and ability to launch complex attacks, and deficiencies in the Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) detention capabilities and resources. ISIS fighters detonated a car bomb to breach the facility and free ISIS detainees and bolster their manpower.³ The SDF, with Coalition ground and air support, repelled the attack and, during a 10-day battle, recaptured most of the detainees.⁴ The attack accelerated existing Coalition-supported plans to move the detainees from their current crowded and makeshift buildings to more secure facilities.⁵ The attack also highlighted the risks to the unknown number of juveniles held in SDF detention.⁶ U.S. and SDF leaders once again called upon the international community to repatriate their nationals held in the facility.⁷

Partner forces in Iraq and Syria conducted counter-ISIS operations independently but continued to rely on the Coalition for critical capabilities. The Iraqi Security Forces (ISF) remained dependent on the Coalition for most intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance (ISR) needs.⁸ Coalition advisors reported that the ISF needs to work on integrating intelligence for airstrike targets and developing better situational awareness during operations.⁹ The SDF, which has no air force, also continued to rely on Coalition ISR.¹⁰

Third parties, particularly Iran-aligned militias, continued to pose a threat to U.S. and Coalition personnel in Iraq and Syria and complicate counter-ISIS operations.¹¹ Iran-aligned militias in Iraq launched attacks against U.S. military and diplomatic facilities during the quarter.¹² The militias limited their attacks during the quarter likely to safeguard their political interests during the government formation process.¹³ In Syria, forces aligned with the Syrian regime, Russia, Iran, and Turkey continued to operate, often distracting the SDF from counter-ISIS operations and seeking to erode the SDF's base of support.¹⁴

Lead IG Oversight Activities

The Lead IG agencies completed eight reports related to OIR during the quarter. These reports examined various activities that support OIR, including the extent to which the DoD effectively distributed and administered the coronavirus disease–2019 (COVID-19) vaccine to the DoD workforce, and whether USAID effectively managed awards and humanitarian assistance programs in Iraq and Syria. As of March 31, 2022, the Lead IG agencies had 11 projects related to OIR ongoing and 7 projects planned.

During this quarter, the investigative branches of the Lead IG agencies and their partner agencies closed 8 investigations, initiated 7 investigations, and coordinated on 78 open investigations. The investigations involve a variety of alleged crimes, including procurement fraud, corruption, grant fraud, theft, program irregularities, computer intrusions, and human trafficking.

Each Lead IG agency maintains its own hotline to receive complaints specific to its agency. 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. The DoD OIG has an investigator to coordinate the hotline contacts among Lead IG agencies and others, as appropriate. During the quarter, the investigator referred 68 cases to Lead IG agencies or other investigative organizations.

Stalled government formation in Iraq slowed Kurdish security reform efforts and the distribution of humanitarian assistance. Political maneuvering between rival political blocs has stalled formation of a new government.¹⁵ Without a new government in place, Iraqi government ministries operated under an extension of the 2021 budget.¹⁶ As a result, they had limited ability to undertake efforts such as paying the salaries of the new brigades formed with the Kurdish Security Forces (KSF) brigade or funding humanitarian assistance for displaced persons camps.¹⁷

Repatriation and reintegration of displaced persons continued with only limited progress. U.S. military leaders and the humanitarian community remained concerned about the al-Hol displaced persons camp in Syria, home to approximately 57,000 people and the site of continued violence and ISIS recruitment and indoctrination.¹⁸ A total of 448 Iraqi households had been repatriated from al-Hol as of February; at the current pace, it will take nearly 15 years to repatriate all the Iraqis at the camp.¹⁹ The number of Syrians returning to their communities of origin from al-Hol and other displaced persons camps was similarly low and while several third-country repatriations occurred during the quarter, approximately 10,000 non-Iraqi foreigners remain at al-Hol and Roj.²⁰

The Russian war in Ukraine exacerbated food insecurity in Iraq and Syria. The prices of staple foods in the two countries—particularly wheat, but also cooking oil, rice, and sugar—increased dramatically during the quarter.²¹ As Iraqis took to the streets of Nasiriyah to protest rising prices, the Iraqi government increased pension payments and suspended customs duties to offset the increased costs.²² The conflict may also cause some ISF helicopters to sit idle, as they are reliant on maintenance services provided in Ukraine.²³ In Syria, where food insecurity was already a widespread concern, the World Food Programme reported an increased demand for assistance.²⁴

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U.S. Army Soldiers conduct a live-fire mortar exercise at Al Asad Air Base, Iraq. (U.S. Army photo)

STATUS OF OIR

- 8 Mission
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A U.S. Soldier drives a M2A3 Bradley Fighting Vehicle. (U.S. Air National Guard photo)

STATUS OF OIR

MISSION

CJTF-OIR Unveils New Campaign Plan

In January, CJTF-OIR published an updated campaign plan, which outlines the objectives, desired end states, and planned courses of action for OIR. The 2022 campaign plan codifies the transition of U.S. and Coalition forces in Iraq to a non-combat role that was completed in December 2021.²⁵ The new CJTF-OIR mission statement reads: “CJTF-OIR advises, assists, and enables partnered forces until they can independently defeat [ISIS] in designated areas of Iraq and Syria, in order to set conditions for long-term security cooperation frameworks.”²⁶

CJTF-OIR elaborated that the conditions it seeks center on the Iraq Security Forces (ISF) ability to independently provide security and stability in Iraq; a stable and secure eastern

Syria; and ISIS unable to resurge in Iraq or Syria.²⁷ Further details about the campaign plan, which is classified, and progress towards OIR objectives are available in the classified appendix to this report.

CJTF-OIR reported that there were no significant changes to Coalition membership, resources, or locations of Coalition forces in Iraq or Syria during the quarter.²⁸

FUNDING

MILITARY OPERATIONS AND PARTNER SUPPORT

For FY 2022, Congress appropriated \$7 billion for OIR, a decrease from \$12.7 billion for FY 2021. The DoD Comptroller reported that \$1.7 billion of the FY 2022 funds had been spent as of the end of February.²⁹

About Operation Inherent Resolve

Operation Inherent Resolve (OIR) began in 2014, after the United States and its partners in the Global Coalition to Defeat ISIS initiated military activity to support local partners combatting ISIS in Iraq and Syria.³⁰ Comprising former al-Qaeda fighters and new recruits, ISIS exploited instability in Iraq and Syria and rapidly seized major cities in the two countries.³¹

Combined Joint Task Force-Operation Inherent Resolve (CJTF-OIR) executes its mission to achieve the enduring defeat of ISIS according to a four-phase operational campaign plan.³² (See Figure 1.) During the first three phases of the campaign, Coalition forces conducted air strikes and targeted raids against ISIS. U.S. and other Coalition forces trained and advised Iraqi and Syrian partner forces and provided them with equipment and other forms of assistance. By March 2019, ISIS no longer held territory in Iraq or Syria.³³

In July 2020, CJTF-OIR transitioned to Phase IV (“Normalize”) of the campaign plan.³⁴ Consistent with

Phase IV objectives, CJTF-OIR shifted from tactical-level training that sought to build the capacity of partner forces in Iraq and Syria to operational-level advising and enabling their operations.³⁵

USAID, the U.S. Government lead for implementing stabilization activities in Iraq, focuses on restoring essential infrastructure and services by working with local partners to identify priorities for recovery; improve social cohesion; help marginalized and displaced populations return to and rebuild their places of origin, and prevent the resurgence of future conflict.³⁶ In Iraq, the DoS promotes a strong democracy, inclusive economic growth, independence from malign influence, a resilient Iraqi Kurdistan Region, and continued Iraqi cooperation with regional neighbors to enhance security, critical infrastructure, and economic development.³⁷ In Syria, the DoS and USAID seek to advance a durable political solution to the Syrian conflict; support humanitarian access; reintegrate displaced persons; and repatriate foreign terrorist fighters and the civilians associated with them.³⁸

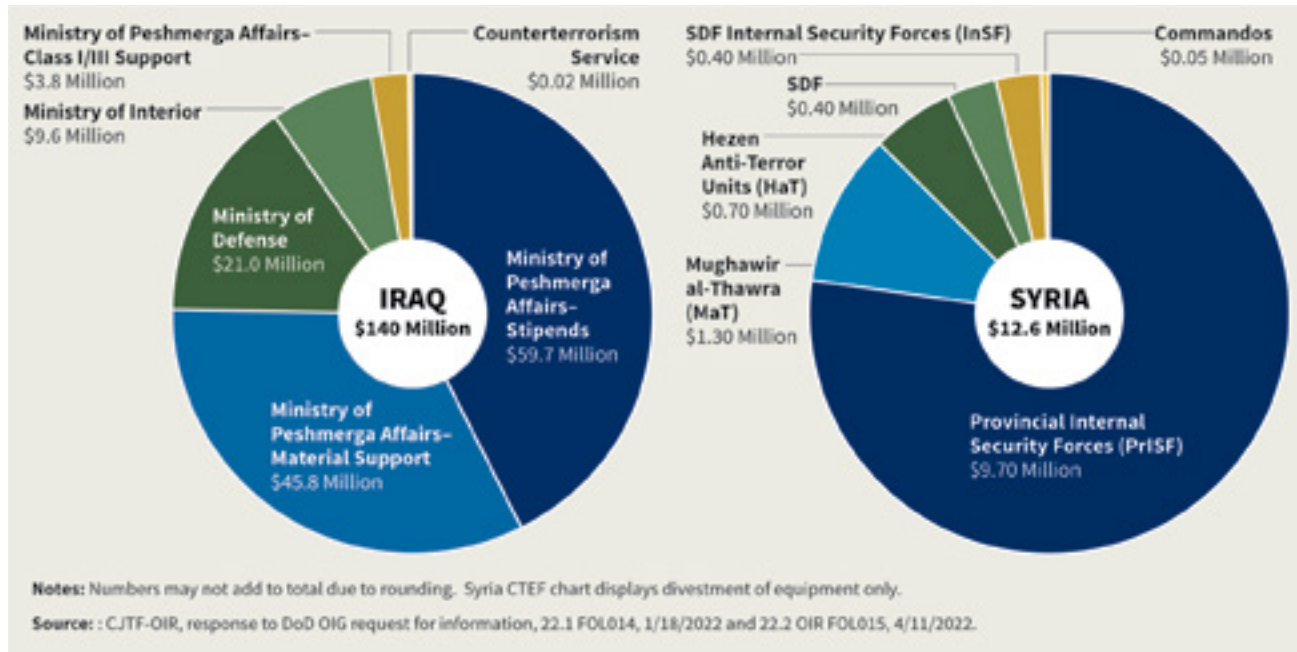
Figure 1.

The OIR Campaign Plan



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

Figure 2.

CTEF-funded Support to Iraq and Syria, January–March 2022

The FY 2022 appropriation includes \$500 million for the Counter-ISIS Train and Equip Fund (CTEF), the primary vehicle for providing material and other support to Iraqi and Syrian partner forces.³⁹ \$345 million of the FY 2022 CTEF appropriation is designated to support Iraqi partner forces. During the quarter, \$140 million was used to provide resources to partner forces.⁴⁰ This brings the total value of FY 2022 CTEF expenses for Iraqi partner forces to \$332 million as of the end of the quarter.⁴¹ In Syria, \$155 million is designated to support partner forces. During the quarter, \$12.6 million was used to provide resources to partner forces.⁴² This brings the total value of FY 2022 CTEF expenses for Syrian partner forces to \$39.2 million as of the end of the quarter.⁴³ (See Figure 2.)

STABILIZATION AND HUMANITARIAN ASSISTANCE

The DoS and USAID work with the United Nations, NGOs, and other implementing partners to fund a variety of programs and services in Iraq and Syria, such as food assistance, cash assistance, shelter, health, and education in Iraq, Syria, and neighboring countries.⁴⁴ (See Table 1.)

During the quarter, USAID obligated an additional \$600,000 in stabilization funding to expand local capacity development in Iraq in line with priorities under USAID’s New Vision for Global Development. USAID said that the funding will be used to build the institutional and organizational capacity of local organizations to provide locally driven solutions for vulnerable populations in Iraq.⁴⁵ The DoS announced nearly \$50 million in additional stabilization assistance for Syria.⁴⁶

Table 1.

U.S. Government Funding Available for the Iraq and Syria Humanitarian Response

IRAQ HUMANITARIAN RESPONSE FY 2021-22			
	USAID BHA	DoS PRM	TOTAL
Humanitarian Funding for Complex Emergency*	\$97,658,686	\$421,584,278	\$519,242,964
TOTAL	\$97,658,686**	\$421,584,278	\$519,242,964
SYRIA REGIONAL RESPONSE FY 2021-22			
	USAID BHA	DoS PRM	TOTAL
Crisis Response	\$744,931,793	\$212,003,000	\$956,934,793
Humanitarian Funding for Countries that Host Syrian Refugees			
Egypt	\$20,280,000	\$20,167,523	\$40,447,523
Iraq	N/A***	\$48,664,523	\$48,664,523
Jordan	\$72,800,000	\$181,346,860	\$254,146,860
Lebanon	\$ 135,627,000	\$285,534,628	\$421,161,628
Turkey	\$10,760,000	\$152,319,877	\$163,079,877
Regional	N/A	\$7,600,000	\$7,600,000
TOTAL	\$984,398,793	\$907,636,411	\$1,892,035,204

Notes: *Inclusive of COVID-19 activities and COVID-19 supplemental funding. **USAID funding is current as 12/22/2021. *** USAID BHA funding for Syrian refugees in Iraq is included in the Iraq Humanitarian Response funding total.

Sources: USAID and DoS, "Iraq-Complex Emergency Fact Sheet #1," 12/22/2021; DoS, vetting comment, 1/26/2022; USAID and DoS, "Syria-Complex Emergency Fact Sheet #5," 4/1/2022; USAID, vetting comment, 4/19/2022.

PERSONNEL

MILITARY PERSONNEL

The approximate number of U.S. military personnel in Iraq and Syria remained unchanged during the quarter, according to the Office of the Under Secretary of Defense for Policy (OUSD(P)).⁴⁷ (See Table 2.)

Minimal Impact of COVID-19 on Military Personnel

Coronavirus disease–2019 (COVID-19) infections among CJTF-OIR personnel decreased compared to the previous quarter. In response, CJTF-OIR loosened some of its COVID-19 mitigation measures, including mask mandates. CJTF-OIR reported that nearly 100 percent of military, civilian, and contractor personnel assigned to Iraq, Syria, and Kuwait were vaccinated against COVID-19 as of the end of the quarter.⁴⁸

Table 2.

U.S. Military Personnel in Iraq and Syria

	Iraq	Syria
U.S. Military	Approximately 2,500	Approximately 900
DoD Contractor	Iraq and Syria: 6,770	

Source: OUSD(P) ISA, vetting comment, 4/21/2022.

CJTF-OIR reported that COVID-19 did not impact its activities, including advisory efforts, during the quarter. There were no staff shortages, travel restrictions, or restrictions on face-to-face meetings with partner forces.⁴⁹

New Army Task Force to Provide Regional Crisis Response

In October, the Special Purpose Marine Air-Ground Task Force tasked with crisis response ended its final deployment to the U.S. Central Command (USCENTCOM) area of responsibility.⁵⁰ The Marine task force was replaced by an Army light infantry battalion that can be routinely used in response to Operation New Normal requirements that support U.S. diplomatic missions across the region, including Mission Iraq, with additional security and evacuation in emergency situations.⁵¹ USCENTCOM reported during the quarter that the ability to support CJTF-OIR and Mission Iraq with crisis response forces was not degraded as a result of the transition.⁵²

Additionally, but under separate authorities, USCENTCOM maintains several mobile response forces that can be employed across the region should additional combat capability be required prior to arrival of reinforcements from the United States. According to USCENTCOM, a portion of these rapid response forces are currently forward deployed under OIR authorities in support of operations in northeastern Syria.⁵³

DIPLOMATIC AND AID PERSONNEL

Personnel Cap, Ordered Departure Limit Diplomatic Staff Level

U.S. Mission Iraq, which comprises the U.S. Embassy in Baghdad, the Baghdad Diplomatic Support Center (BDSC), and the Consulate General in Erbil, continued to operate during the quarter under the 304-person ceiling for certain in-country U.S. direct-hire and third-country personnel.⁵⁴ In addition, the embassy and BDSC have been on ordered departure status—a procedure by which the number of government employees at the post is temporarily reduced—since March 2020 in response to health and safety concerns.⁵⁵ In April, the DoS extended the ordered departure to May 13.⁵⁶ The DoS said that if the ordered departure status is not lifted or the in-country staffing cap does not increase, the ability of Mission Iraq to achieve its Integrated Country Strategy goals may be impacted.⁵⁷

In summer 2019, the DoS conducted a staffing review to identify the minimum number of staff needed to advance the President’s strategic objectives while minimizing the number of personnel at risk in a volatile high-threat, high-risk environment. The DoS said it routinely reviews and adjusts staffing levels at embassies and consulates to ensure they have the proper resources to meet U.S. national security objectives, consistent with applicable

authorities. The DoS Under Secretary for Management develops and executes management policies, including control of positions, funds, and other worldwide DoS resources required to implement the foreign policies of the United States.⁵⁸ Chiefs of Mission are responsible for periodically reviewing staffing levels and adjusting them as needed to carry out mission goals.⁵⁹ With regular rotations, rest and recreation leave, and other travel, the DoS anticipated the population of U.S. direct-hire employees in-country would seldom exceed 300 at any time.⁶⁰ The DoS said that it was conducting a comprehensive staffing review to determine whether the in-country staffing cap should increase.⁶¹

Minimal Impact of COVID-19 on Diplomatic Staff

The DoS reported that the impact of COVID-19 on embassy operations during the quarter was minimal. With 99 percent of Mission Iraq employees vaccinated, the mission relaxed masking and social distancing requirements, allowing the mission to resume most pre-COVID-19 operations. The requirement to test all travelers to the United States 1 day prior to travel has put a strain on the Health Unit, but the embassy reported that the workload is manageable. During the quarter, most local staff returned to the workplace. All local staff who returned are fully vaccinated.⁶²

FACILITIES

Most Consular Services Remain Suspended Pending Repairs from 2019 Attacks

In December 2019, a series of attacks on the Baghdad embassy compound destroyed three of the five Compound Access Control (CAC) facilities and damaged cameras on the perimeter walls, and several guard towers.⁶³ Following the attack, during which the attackers scaled the walls, the DoS Bureau of Diplomatic Security determined that the standard perimeter wall height at U.S. diplomatic facilities around the world should increase.⁶⁴

The Consular CAC, where all consular visitors were screened, was destroyed in the attacks. As a result, the embassy suspended in-person consular services, including screening of consular applicants, visa services, and routine services for U.S. citizens, though it continued to process visas for applicants with compound access, such as local staff and contractors. In the interim, the Consulate General in Erbil provided American citizen services and processed nonimmigrant visa applications. Consulate General Erbil also handled emergency immigrant visa cases that would usually be handled in person by the consular office in Baghdad.⁶⁵

The DoS Bureau of Overseas Buildings Operations (OBO) said it expedited plans to return the Consular CAC to its original, pre-attack condition and functionality. The project is scheduled for completion in September 2022, 32 months after the attack, and will allow the embassy to return to providing consular services.⁶⁶ In addition, the OBO continues to plan to reconstruct and significantly upgrade all compound CACs, including those not damaged, to meet or exceed current DoS requirements for overseas facility security. The estimated cost of this project is \$260 million; the OBO anticipates awarding the contract for design services by the end of May 2022. Once the design is complete, the DoS intends to reprogram prior year funds and award a construction contract for the work, currently planned in FY 2023.⁶⁷





The SDF participates in a live-fire exercise. (U.S. Army photo)

STATUS OF ISIS



U.S. Soldiers engage with local residents in northeastern Syria. (U.S. Army photo)

STATUS OF ISIS

Combined Joint Task Force-Operation Inherent Resolve (CJTF-OIR) “advises, assists and enables” partner forces until they can independently defeat ISIS in designated areas of Iraq and Syria.⁶⁸ The defeat of ISIS includes ensuring that the terrorist group cannot reconstitute its forces, plan and execute attacks, and control population and territory.⁶⁹

This quarter marked the third anniversary of the March 2019 defeat of ISIS in Baghuz, Syria, when the Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) and their Coalition partners stripped ISIS of its last area of territorial control in Syria and Iraq. The Defense Intelligence Agency (DIA) reported that ISIS continues to operate as a low-level insurgency in remote areas of both countries, and the group’s capacity remains “modestly diminished” despite the complex attack in January on a key SDF detention facility holding ISIS detainees.⁷⁰

ISIS Leader Dies in U.S. Raid

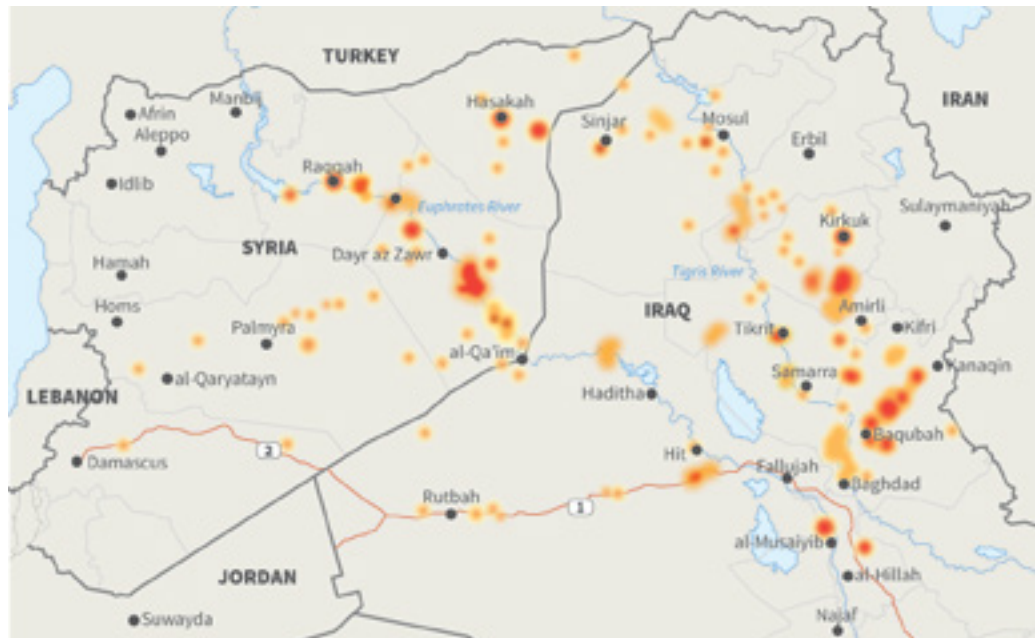
On February 2, U.S. forces conducted a military operation in Syria targeting Abu Ibrahim al-Hashimi al-Qurayshi, the leader of ISIS, whose real name was Amir Mohammed Saeed Abdul-Rahman al-Mawla.⁷¹ The DoD reported that Abu Ibrahim was killed when he detonated an explosive device during the raid.⁷² The DIA reported that it did not observe any significant change in the group’s strategy, objectives or cohesion following his death.⁷³

ISIS ACTIVITY IN IRAQ AND SYRIA

January 1, 2022–March 31, 2022

IRAQ ISIS attacks decreased, remaining largely concentrated in the Wadi al-Shay area of southern Kirkuk province and within the river basins that cut along the Hamrin Mountains in Salah ad Din and Diyala provinces. A relatively small increase in attacks targeted security forces along the international highway in Anbar province, but casualties were low.

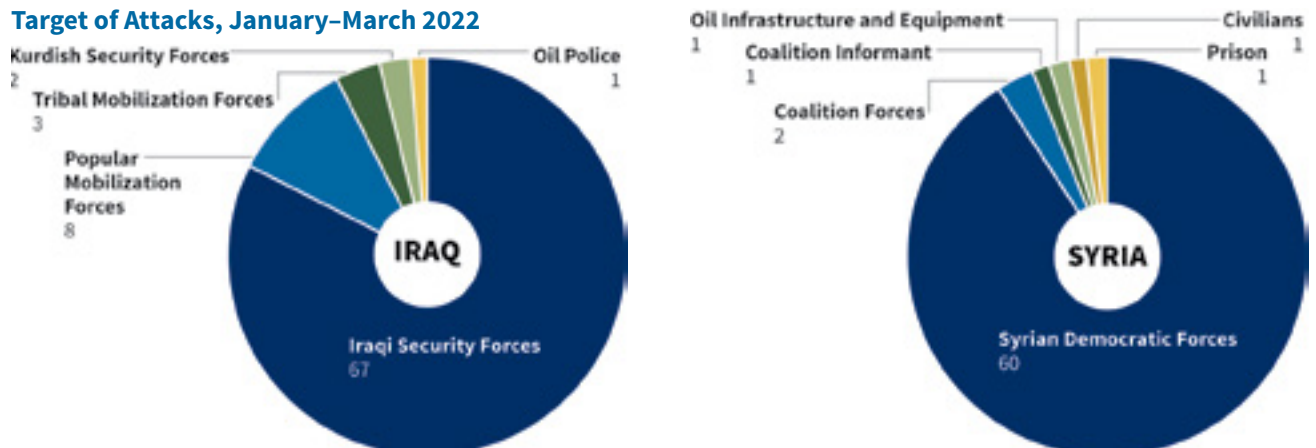
SYRIA ISIS focused attacks on the SDF, as highlighted by the Ghwayran facility attack in January. ISIS did not claim any attacks targeting pro-regime forces; press and social media attributed some lethal attacks on regime and Iran-aligned forces to ISIS.



ISIS Attacks by Month, January 2020–March 2022



Target of Attacks, January–March 2022



Note: Some attacks had more than one target. Numbers displayed above may exceed total number of attacks during the quarter.

Sources: CJTF-OIR, response to DoD OIG request for information, 22.2 OIR FOL018, 4/11/2022; Janes Terrorism and Insurgency Centre, data for non-state armed group attacks, statements, and actions by Islamic State in Iraq and Syria, 1/1/2021–3/31/2022; Enabling Peace in Iraq Center, “Iraq Security and Humanitarian Monitor,” 12/30/2021–4/7/2022.

In March, ISIS announced it had appointed a new leader under the pseudonym Abu al-Hasan al-Hashimi al-Qurayshi.⁷⁴ He is ISIS's third leader.⁷⁵ The announcement, which came via ISIS social media accounts, did not provide information on his identity or background. ISIS did not give the new leader's real name or release a photo of him.⁷⁶ However, citing Iraqi and Western security sources, the Reuters news agency reported that the new leader is Juma Awad al-Badri, the older brother of ISIS's first leader, known as Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi, who was killed during a U.S. Special Operations raid in Syria in 2019.⁷⁷

The DIA and other U.S. Government sources could not confirm the identity of the new leader, but noted that multiple ISIS branches globally—including many across Africa and the Middle East—pledged allegiance to the new leader and promised to increase their operations, suggesting he has support from “most or all of the group’s global enterprise.”⁷⁸

ISIS Attacks SDF Detention Facility in Syria

On January 20, ISIS attacked the Ghwayran Detention Facility in northeastern Syria's Hasakah governorate, sparking a 10-day battle.⁷⁹ The SDF said that approximately 500 died in the battle, though accounts of casualties vary and have not been confirmed by U.S. Government sources.⁸⁰ CJTF-OIR and the DIA said that ISIS attacked the detention facility to free its fighters and refill its ranks.⁸¹

The attack demonstrated the group's continued ability to organize and launch a complex attack.⁸² According to the SDF and research organizations, more than 200 ISIS assailants were involved in the attack, some of whom hid in nearby houses before the attack, terrorizing residents. Then, ISIS used a car bomb to breach the complex perimeter.⁸³ As ISIS fighters occupied cell blocks within the facility, inmates staged riots, some barricading themselves in a separate building.⁸⁴ The SDF said ISIS fighters readied a truck loaded with weapons so detainees could arm themselves as they escaped.⁸⁵ Assailants captured and killed dozens of guards, using the captives as bargaining chips to get food, drink, and medical attention.⁸⁶

While the attack was deadly and destructive, ISIS did not succeed in freeing a large number of detainees from the facility. The DIA said that ISIS initially freed several hundred detainees, but most were subsequently recaptured or killed during the SDF-led recovery operations.⁸⁷

Coalition forces mobilized aircraft and armored fighting vehicles to assist the SDF response to the attack.⁸⁸ CJTF-OIR reported that Coalition ground force support included direct action, security, reconnaissance, checkpoint security, and clearance operations.⁸⁹ U.S. mechanized Bradley Fighting Vehicles provided security and freedom of maneuver for the SDF, enabling the SDF to secure the detention facility.⁹⁰ Coalition rotary and fixed wing aircraft targeted ISIS and assisted ground forces with aerial intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance (ISR), adding situational awareness about enemy activities in a “very dynamic” situation, CJTF-OIR said.⁹¹ CJTF-OIR said that it conducted airstrikes against ISIS forces, including precision targeting of ISIS fighters who were attacking from buildings in the area.⁹² There were no U.S. or Coalition casualties.⁹³

On January 20, ISIS attacked the Ghwayran Detention Facility in northeastern Syria's Hasakah governorate, sparking a 10-day battle.

The DIA said that the Ghwayran facility attack confirmed that ISIS sustains significant presence in Syria and maintains the ability to exploit the SDF's weakness in controlling detention facilities.

A week after the attack, the SDF announced that it had regained control of the detention facility⁹⁴ In the days and weeks that followed, the SDF methodically cleared residential areas and recaptured escaped detainees and ISIS fighters.⁹⁵

ISIS media portrayed the detention facility attack as a sign of resurgence. However, the DIA noted that overall, the quality of ISIS attacks in both Iraq and Syria has declined over the past 2 years, and the group's capabilities did not significantly change following the Ghwayran facility attack.⁹⁶ The DIA said the attack confirmed that the group sustains significant presence in Syria and maintains the ability to exploit the SDF's weaknesses in controlling detention facilities.⁹⁷ The Commander of CJTF-OIR, Major General John Brennan, said that ISIS lost many fighters in its "desperate attempt to display relevance," and the attack ultimately made the group weaker.⁹⁸

Downward Trend of Claimed Attacks Continues But Threat Remains

The DIA said that ISIS continued to operate in small, rural-based cells that conducted mostly opportunistic attacks, including hit-and-run operations and ambushes against security forces, while taking opportunities to carry out occasional high-profile attacks in cities.⁹⁹ The group continued to use improvised explosive devices (IED), small arms, rockets, and mortars in its attacks, and to exploit or provoke sectarian and ethnic tensions by assassinating community or tribal leaders and employing other forms of coercion to gain support among Sunni Arab populations.¹⁰⁰

CJTF-OIR reported that ISIS claimed fewer attacks during the quarter than the same period in 2021, continuing a downward trend.¹⁰¹ (See page 17.)

ISIS Remains a Threat to U.S. and Partner Interests

Despite the decrease in ISIS attacks and the Ghwayran facility attack, the U.S. Government and military did not change their assessments of the threat the group poses. The DIA reported that ISIS persists in its intent and effort to rebuild its organization and reestablish a viable insurgency capable of contesting the Syrian regime and Iraqi government for "territorial and social control" across the two countries.¹⁰²

The outgoing Commander of the U.S. Central Command (USCENTCOM), General Kenneth F. McKenzie, Jr., told Congress in March that ISIS remains a "credible threat" to the stability of the Iraqi government and to Coalition and U.S. forces and interests in Iraq, and the group remains "a significant threat" in Syria.¹⁰³ He said that in Iraq, ISIS maintains the limited ability to target bases housing U.S. and Coalition forces both in the Kurdistan region and Baghdad. ISIS's continued efforts to stoke ethnic or sectarian tensions, General McKenzie said, could embroil Iraqi and Coalition forces "in a rapidly deteriorating security environment with little warning."¹⁰⁴

General McKenzie said that the Ghwayran facility attack demonstrated that ISIS's will is "unbroken."¹⁰⁵ In testimony before Congress, the General noted that while ISIS's ability to project power in Syria was degraded by persistent Coalition and SDF pressure, ISIS would

likely exploit any increased conflict between the SDF and rival forces in Syria, such as the Syrian regime or Turkish forces.¹⁰⁶

General McKenzie stated that sustained counterterrorism pressure is key.¹⁰⁷ In Iraq, consistent pressure on ISIS has resulted in key leader losses, reduced access to resources and materiel, and hampered the group's ability to infiltrate urban areas.¹⁰⁸ In Syria, that pressure keeps ISIS on the run, threatening its day-to-day survival and preventing resurgence.¹⁰⁹

ISIS Remains Cohesive While Struggling to Replenish Manpower and Finances

The DIA reported that even with some loss of capability over the past year and a half, ISIS's branches in Iraq and Syria remained cohesive during the quarter, with neither suffering any major factionalism, fracturing, or loss of command and control.¹¹⁰ The group continued to maintain greater capabilities and a relatively larger presence in Iraq compared to Syria.¹¹¹

OPERATIONS AND TACTICS: The DIA said that ISIS remained focused on preserving its forces and maintaining freedom of movement in rural areas of Iraq.¹¹² ISIS fighters continued to use restrictive terrain such as deserts, mountains, and riverbeds for safe haven and to exploit gaps between security forces to conduct both attacks and sustainment operations. In January, ISIS attacked an Iraqi Army post in Diyala province, killing 11 Iraqi soldiers; the DIA, citing press reporting, said poor coordination among the Iraqi Security Forces (ISF) likely contributed to the failure to protect or warn the base.¹¹³

In Syria, the Ghwayran facility attack dominated ISIS operational activity during the quarter, the DIA said. ISIS continued to target static locations in Syria, such as checkpoints, and targets of opportunity, such as regime and SDF convoys, and occasionally civilians. Like in Iraq, ISIS exploited restrictive terrain in the desert, mountains, and valleys to maintain small, clandestine cells and launch attacks.¹¹⁴

The DIA, citing media reporting, said that ISIS continued to attack critical petroleum infrastructure in central and eastern Syria during the quarter. For example, ISIS claimed a January attack near an oil station between Homs and Dayr az Zawr governorates and near the al-Kharratah oil field in the western part of Dayr az Zawr governorate.¹¹⁵

RECRUITING AND SUSTAINMENT: The United Nations Security Council estimated in January that ISIS retained 6,000 to 10,000 fighters across Iraq and Syria—fewer than the estimated force size of 10,000 in early 2021, and 14,000 to 18,000 in January 2020.¹¹⁶ The DIA said that ISIS sustained its emphasis on bolstering its manpower through the freeing of detained fighters in Iraq and Syria, as demonstrated by the Ghwayran facility attack.¹¹⁷

In Iraq, ISIS continued to struggle to replenish its manpower. The DIA said the group remained extremely unpopular in local communities, including among the historically more accommodating Sunni population. In Syria, ISIS will very likely continue to focus on freeing its members from SDF-run detention facilities. The DIA said the group probably aspires to conduct similar attacks against prisons in Iraq but ISIS currently does not have the capability to conduct significant prison-breaks from the more secure Iraqi prisons.¹¹⁸

The DIA reported that even with some loss of capability over the past year and a half, ISIS's branches in Iraq and Syria remained cohesive during the quarter, with neither suffering any major factionalism, fracturing, or loss of command and control.

GEOGRAPHIC OPERATING AREAS: The DIA did not observe notable changes to locations in Iraq where ISIS operated during the quarter.¹¹⁹ ISIS remained operationally active along the swathe of territory near the Iraqi Kurdistan Region known as the Kurdish Coordination Line (KCL).¹²⁰

In Syria, ISIS continued its strategic retreat to the mountainous areas of Syria's central desert in order to rebuild organizational capacity and replenish personnel.¹²¹ The DIA said that ISIS continued to operate mainly in the central desert and across northern and eastern provinces, while top ISIS leaders likely remained in the western Idlib governorate. In northeastern and southern Syria, ISIS continued to vie for influence among Sunni Arab populations. The group retained a smaller, but still active presence in the northern Raqqah and Hasakah governorates.¹²²

SDF members participate in a live-fire exercise alongside U.S. Soldiers in Syria. (U.S. Army photo)

FINANCES: The Department of the Treasury (Treasury) reported that ISIS's financial situation remained largely unchanged since the previous quarter. ISIS continued to raise funds through extortion of oil smuggling networks in eastern Syria, kidnapping for ransom, targeting civilian businesses and populations, other extortion, looting, and the possible



operation of front companies. The group relied on money services businesses, including hawalas—informal money transfer channels— throughout Iraq, Syria, and Turkey, to transfer funds internationally. Treasury estimated that ISIS probably has tens of millions of U.S. dollars available in cash reserves dispersed across the region, but Treasury does not know the amount of money ISIS distributed during the quarter.¹²³

In its semi-annual report on ISIS, the United Nations Security Council said that UN member states estimated ISIS’s current reserves to be between \$25 million and \$50 million, with some suggesting that the lower sum is more accurate. The report said that the group is now consistently spending more than it raises. Funds are primarily spent on payments to fighters and family members of deceased fighters, as well as on operational activities and attempts to release fighters from detention.¹²⁴

Treasury reported that ISIS supporters used virtual currencies and online fundraising platforms to transfer funds, including to al-Hol and other displaced persons camps. The group’s supporters gathered and sent funds to intermediaries in Turkey who then smuggled the cash into Syria or sent the funds to hawalas operating in the camp.¹²⁵

EXTERNAL OPERATIONS: The DIA said that ISIS still seeks to conduct attacks in Western countries but likely remains unable to direct attacks against the U.S. homeland, and continues to rely on small-scale, inspired attacks to demonstrate its reach beyond its normal operating areas. Through propaganda, ISIS leaders have sought to publicly encourage attacks in the United States or Europe, but probably remain unable or unwilling to do so. ISIS did not claim responsibility for any attacks in the United States or Europe in 2021 or early 2022.¹²⁶

Violent Clashes, Risk of Indoctrination Spark Concerns About ISIS in Al-Hol Camp

During the quarter, indoctrination activities attributed to ISIS continued at the al-Hol camp for displaced persons in Syria’s Hasakah governorate, sparking renewed calls by U.S., SDF, and international leaders for countries to repatriate their nationals who remain in the camp.¹²⁷

In a series of public statements during the quarter, General McKenzie said that ISIS operatives resided among the camp’s approximately 57,000 residents—mostly women and children—who remain vulnerable to violence and indoctrination.¹²⁸ He said that the slow repatriation and reintegration of individuals in displaced persons camps and SDF detention facilities remains “the biggest impediment to ensuring the enduring defeat of ISIS.”¹²⁹ He added that if al-Hol residents are not able to leave the camp, and children remain vulnerable to indoctrination, “we’re going to face ISIS 2.0 down the road.”¹³⁰

Table 3.
Killings in al-Hol Camp, October 2020–March 2022

Quarter	Number of Killings
October–December 2020	13
January–March 2021	45
April–June 2021	16
July–September 2021	19
October–December 2021	12
January–March 2022	8

Note: Not all killings have been attributed to ISIS.

Sources: DoS, responses to DoS OIG requests for information, 6/18/2021, 9/18/2021, 10/8/2021, 12/16/2021, and 4/21/2022.

The DoS reported that since January 1, there were 8 killings and 1 attempted killing of al-Hol camp residents, a significant decrease from previous quarters.

In a January report, the United Nations Secretary-General said that ISIS exerts “social control over al-Hol,” preying on residents and exposing them to ISIS ideology. One UN member state reported that the group had reinstated its child indoctrination and recruitment program in al-Hol, dubbed “Cubs of the Caliphate.”¹³¹

The DoS reported that since January 1, there were 8 killings and 1 attempted killing of al-Hol camp residents, a significant decrease from previous quarters.¹³² (See Table 3.) Media and independent observers attribute a large share of violence in the camp to ISIS.¹³³ The DoS noted that not all killings have been attributed to ISIS.¹³⁴

Media and monitoring groups reported that security forces clashed with suspected operatives in March.¹³⁵ Media reporting said that during the clashes, ISIS fighters used combat weapons, including rocket-propelled grenades and automatic rifles.¹³⁶ Media reports said that 3 people, including a child, were killed, and 10 people were wounded.¹³⁷ In response, SDF units imposed a curfew in the camp and the surrounding town; SDF forces arrested at least 46 people in a sweep, according to a war monitor.¹³⁸

Several attacks during the quarter targeted aid workers in the camp, prompting humanitarian organizations operating in the camp to suspend operations.¹³⁹ On January 11, a Syrian aid worker with the Kurdish Red Crescent was killed at a health facility inside the camp, the DoS reported, noting that it had no information on the perpetrators. The next day, a doctor with the International Committee of the Red Cross was wounded in a stabbing at the organization’s field hospital in the camp. The DoS assessed that these attacks were unrelated, and that the aid workers were likely not intentionally targeted because of their affiliation.¹⁴⁰ A war monitor attributed three other killings inside the camp in January to ISIS, none of which were confirmed by the U.S. Government.¹⁴¹ In February, a war monitor reported that a child was shot and killed and six women were wounded in the camp’s annex after ISIS-linked residents assaulted two guards.¹⁴² Following the altercation, the camp was placed on alert.¹⁴³ In addition, there were multiple fires in the camp that caused injuries and deaths during the quarter.¹⁴⁴

CJTF-OIR said that SDF security presence inside al-Hol improved during the quarter through increased patrols and improved capabilities and tactics in response to incidents. The Special Operations Joint Task Force-Levant (SOJTF-L) said that the SDF conducted three operations inside the camp during the quarter, responding to larger incidents in the camp or as a result of intelligence the SDF has gathered. The operations resulted in more than 130 arrests. CJTF-OIR said that the SDF was able to build on intelligence and materials it discovered during raids to further inform operations and build broader awareness.¹⁴⁵

CJTF-OIR said that U.S. Army Civil Affairs units supported coordination between the camp administration and security forces in al-Hol to assist with training and equipment shortfalls of local security forces at the camp and providing updates for the U.S. Government on issues of concern.¹⁴⁶

Additional information about ISIS capabilities during the quarter can be found in the classified appendix to this report.





Sulaymaniyah Asayish SWAT members prepare an assault during a helicopter training exercise near Sulaymaniyah, Iraq. (U.S. Army photo)

IRAQ

- 26 Security
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IRAQ

In Iraq, the Combined Joint Task Force-Operation Inherent Resolve (CJTF-OIR) advises, assists, and enables the Iraqi Security Forces (ISF) and Kurdish Security Forces (KSF) until they can independently defeat ISIS in designated areas of the country, in order to set conditions for long-term security cooperation frameworks.¹⁴⁷ In addition, the DoS encourages Iraq’s continued cooperation with its regional neighbors to enhance security, provide critical infrastructure, and stimulate economic development.¹⁴⁸

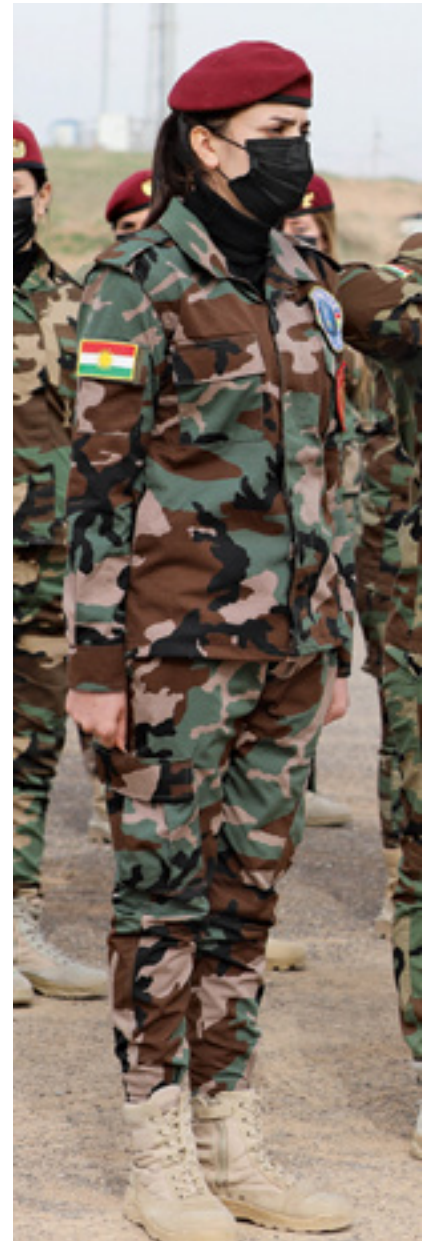
SECURITY

Coalition forces advise, assist, and enable Iraqi forces through the Military Advisory Group (MAG) and the Special Operations Advisory Group (SOAG).¹⁴⁹ (See Page 28). MAG advisors work primarily with the ISF and KSF, while SOAG advisors work with the Iraqi Counter Terrorism Service (CTS).¹⁵⁰ CJTF-OIR advisors do not advise, enable or assist the sectarian militias belonging to the Popular Mobilization Forces and Tribal Mobilization Forces.¹⁵¹

CJTF-OIR reported that MAG operations are “right sized” to meet its campaign plan objectives at the operational level, but that the number of advisors could decrease in the future as Coalition troop contributing nations continue to evaluate their participation in OIR.¹⁵² In addition to advisors, CJTF-OIR has other forces in Iraq and Kuwait who provide logistics, medical, force protection, and other support to ISF, KSF, and CTS advising efforts.¹⁵³

Concurrent and in coordination with the OIR mission, the Office of Security Cooperation–Iraq (OSC-I) at the U.S. Embassy in Baghdad conducts bilateral security assistance and security cooperation activities, including training, with Iraqi partner forces.¹⁵⁴ In addition, NATO Mission Iraq advises ISF leaders at the ministerial level.¹⁵⁵

Additional information about ISF and KSF capabilities can be found in the classified appendix to this report.



SELECTED KEY EVENTS, JANUARY 1, 2022–MARCH 31, 2022

JANUARY 4–6

Iran-aligned militias launch rocket and UAV attacks over 3 consecutive days targeting Al Asad Air Base, which hosts Coalition forces. No casualties were reported.

JANUARY 28

UNAMI says it is concerned by an escalation in political violence in Iraq. The increase in violence comes as efforts to form a new government stalled.

JANUARY 21

During a nighttime raid, ISIS kills 11 ISF ground forces personnel in Diyala province.

JANUARY 30–FEBRUARY 3

The ISF claims that it killed at least 30 ISIS fighters—involved in the January 21 attack on the ISF barracks in Diyala—mostly in airstrikes in Diyala, Ninewa, and Salah ad Din provinces.





Zerevani Peshmerga security guards practice drill and ceremony in Erbil, Iraq. (U.S. Army photo)

FEBRUARY 8

ISIS fighters are killed in airstrike in Ninewa province south of Mosul.

MARCH 13

Iran launches 12 ballistic missiles at Erbil, striking residential areas near where the new U.S. Consulate compound is being built, injuring one civilian. No U.S. personnel or facilities were hit.

MAR

MARCH 9

The Kurdish Ministry of Peshmerga Affairs announces it does not have enough funds to pay soldiers allocated to a new Joint Force Brigade.

MARCH 30

Iraq's parliament fails to elect a new president due to the lack of a quorum, the third failure to select a president since the October 2021 elections.

THE OPERATING ENVIRONMENT IN IRAQ

MAG-KSF Advising

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



SOAG-CTS Advising

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

MAG-ISF Advising

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

Note: OCs are not shown in their actual location within each province.

Sources: CJTF-OIR, response to DoD OIG request for information, 22.2 OIR 035, 3/23/2022.

COUNTER TERRORISM SERVICE

CTS Operations Decrease During the Quarter

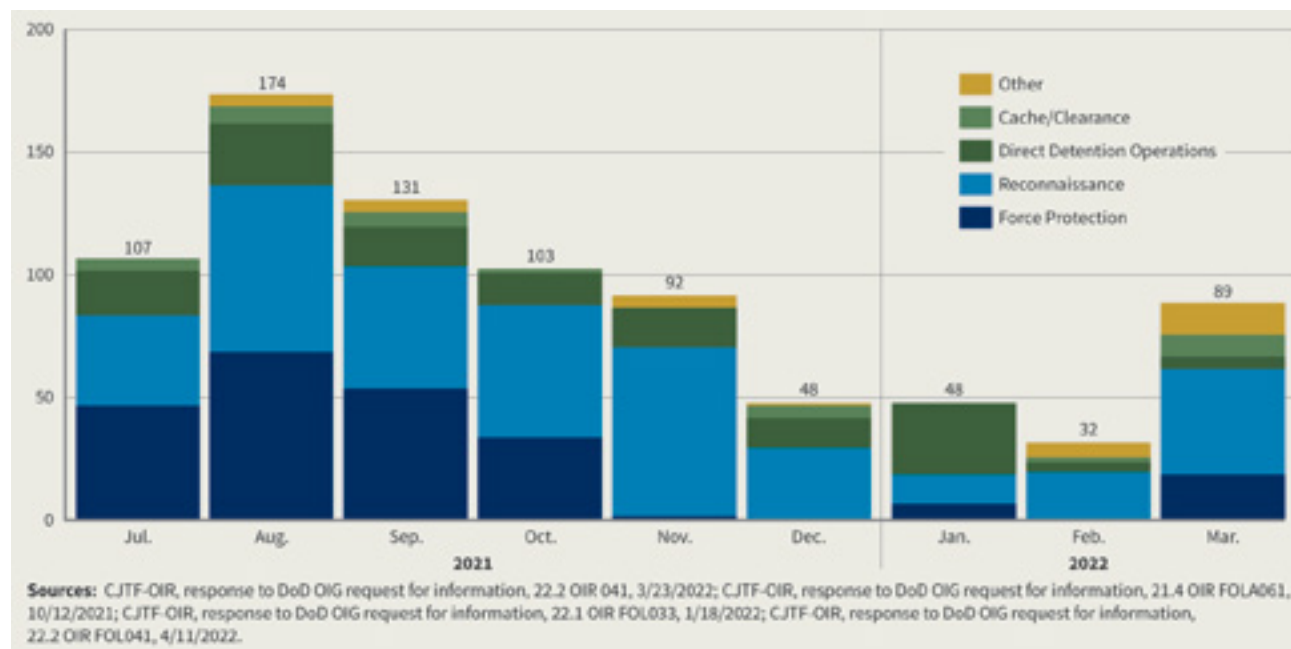
The CTS is the premier special operations force within the ISF. The CTS conducted fewer operations (169) during the quarter compared to the previous quarter. (See Figure 3.) CJTF-OIR reported that the CTS operational tempo per month decreased compared to the previous quarter.¹⁵⁶

CJTF-OIR said that CTS tactical level units regularly conduct unilateral operations.¹⁵⁷ During the quarter, CTS units detained 40 individuals with outstanding warrants during 38 direct detention operations.¹⁵⁸ However, CJTF-OIR reported that targets are regularly low-level and the overall conviction rate is less than 10 percent.¹⁵⁹

During the quarter, the CTS conducted 12 partnered operations with Coalition forces. CJTF-OIR said that the primary reason for these partnered operations was to allow Coalition advisors to accurately assess CTS capabilities while under stress and operational conditions. In most cases, Coalition forces remained at a Coalition facility to advise and assist remotely. During some operations, Coalition forces physically accompanied CTS elements until they reached either a forward partner force base or outpost, out of the line of sight of the objective area. From there, the Coalition forces supported the CTS with ISR, battle tracking, and radio communications.¹⁶⁰

Figure 3.

CTS Operations by Type, July 1, 2021–March 31, 2022



Meanwhile, the primary enablement the CTS received from CJTF-OIR was in support of their target discovery and target refinement capabilities. CJTF-OIR reported that the targeting capabilities of the CTS were still significantly handicapped, requiring continued Coalition technical assistance to the CTS, including ISR support.¹⁶¹

CTS's Ability to Direct Airstrikes a Force Multiplier

A key area of continued focus for SOAG advisors is the development of Iraqi Terminal Attack Controllers (ITAC), ground-based personnel within the CTS who coordinate air support and direct air-to-ground strikes. CJTF-OIR reported that the ITAC program has been a force multiplier for the CTS. The program also drives increased synchronization and integration across the ISF. However, CJTF-OIR said the ITACs need to transition to conducting close air support more frequently with Iraqi Air Force aircraft, rather than with Coalition assets. Coalition advisors focused on building ITAC confidence and unilateral capability with Iraqi Air Force platforms.¹⁶²

CJTF-OIR said that all ITACs in the CTS are trained and educated at Academia, the CTS training school. They receive their basic ITAC qualification and certification in 10 weeks, then report back to their respective Iraqi Special Operations Force (ISOF) brigades. Each ISOF brigade has roughly 8 to 10 ITACs, but ITAC use varies across the formations.¹⁶³

CJTF-OIR stated that the 2nd ISOF Brigade has led the way in terms of integrating ITACs into the mission planning process and with the Iraqi Air Force. The brigade used ITACs during two counter-ISIS missions during the quarter. However, CJTF-OIR reported that the ITACs' participation in operations had a minimal effect due to struggles with formalization of the Iraqi air request process and overall integration within the CTS battalions. During some recent operations, the 2nd ISOF Brigade requested Iraqi Air Force assets, but the Joint Operations Command–Iraq (JOC-I) denied the request.¹⁶⁴

Coalition Advising to CTS Continues At Various Levels

SOAG-CTS advising during the quarter included the following activities:

Targeting: The main focus of SOAG advising efforts during the quarter continued to be refining the CTS's approach to the targeting cycle. In particular, the CTS further developed its capability to execute the "find" and "fix" functions.¹⁶⁵ (See Figure 4.) CJTF-OIR said that while lower level units have improved, the CTS's ability to independently execute the targeting cycle is limited. The CTS struggles to locate and attack key ISIS members, often settling for operations targeting lower-level ISIS members. CJTF-OIR assessed that the CTS's ability to disseminate information remained a critical limitation due to both its organizational structure and cultural reluctance.¹⁶⁶

Site Exploitation: The CTS Special Forensics Investigation Lab continued to develop its capability to exploit captured enemy material. CJTF-OIR said that the laboratory requires ongoing support to ensure that captured enemy material is properly handed-off by the units that seize it, analyzed by the lab, and then utilized for follow-on targeting.¹⁶⁷ At the ministerial level, SOAG advisors supported the integration of forensic outputs of the laboratory with the intelligence targeting cycle and warrant-based detention process.¹⁶⁸

A key area of continued focus for SOAG advisors is the development of Iraqi Terminal Attack Controllers, ground-based personnel within the CTS who coordinate air support and direct air-to-ground strikes.

Figure 4.

The ISF Target Development Process



Command and Control: SOAG advisors continued to support the establishment of an operational headquarters for the CTS, known as the Counter Terrorism Command. CJTF-OIR said that during the quarter, advisors enabled courses in media operations, in addition to advisement to the Counter Terrorism Command’s Combined Joint Operations Center.¹⁶⁹

Readiness: Coalition advisors continued to assist the CTS in identifying tactical readiness gaps using the Combat Readiness and Preparedness Inspection, a self-evaluation tool that gives an indication of the war-fighting ability of an inspected battalion.¹⁷⁰ CJTF-OIR said that the inspections are intended to be held annually by each unit in the CTS, but that the CTS Commander can move the evaluation to assess forces at his discretion. The inspection consists of multiple events, such as a physical fitness test, equipment inspections, vehicle inspections, patrol evaluations, ruck march, weapons proficiency, vehicle maneuvering, medical skills, medical evacuation, land navigation, and officer theory testing.¹⁷¹

CTS leadership recently began firing battalion commanders for failing to improve during these inspections, which has motivated remaining commanders to focus their efforts on preparing for inspections. These rigorous standards have prompted improvement within the CTS, with CJTF-OIR noting that the 1st Battalion, 1st ISOF Brigade recently completed their second round of inspections and improved by 20 percent from the previous year. Coalition forces advise on preparatory training and observe the testing, but are not evaluators.¹⁷²

Training: Coalition advisors also worked with the CTS training center, Academia, to improve the ITAC course, advised on the new class of officers on the Special Operations Course, and developed the CTS English language capability to increase interoperability with the Coalition.¹⁷³

CTEF: CJTF-OIR said it did not provide any equipment to the CTS through the Counter-ISIS Train and Equip Fund (CTEF) during the quarter.¹⁷⁴ USCENTCOM said that while OSC-I continued to support the CTS programmatically, there was no material support that OSC-I provided to the CTS this quarter.¹⁷⁵

The DoS added that during the quarter OSC-I conducted multiple engagements with CTS leadership to review their security assistance priorities, assessed the CTS language lab for refurbishment, supported the CTS during the U.S. Defense Security Cooperation Agency's Security Assistance Management Review, and continued support for multiple active Foreign Military Sales cases, including communications maintenance and training support as well as contractor support to the CTS forensics laboratory.¹⁷⁶

Table 4.

Counter-ISIS Airstrikes by Iraqi Aircraft, January 1–March 31, 2021

Date	Aircraft	Location	Target	Munition
Jan. 8	2 x Bell-407	Baghdad	1 x BDL + personnel	12.7mm gun
Jan. 8	1 x AC-208	Diyala	1 x BDL	1 x AGM-114
Jan. 9	2 x F-16	Salah ad Din	3 x BDL	8 x GBU-12
Jan. 12	2 x F-16	Baghdad	1 x BDL	1 x GBU-12
Jan. 13	1 x AC-208	Baghdad	personnel	1 x AGM-114
Jan. 22	1 x AC-208	Ninewa	1 x vehicle + personnel	1 x AGM-114
Jan. 23	2 x F-16	Salah ad Din	personnel	4 x GBU-12
Jan. 24	2 x F-16	Salah ad Din	personnel	2 x GBU-12
Jan. 24	2 x F-16 + 1 x AC-208	Baghdad	personnel	2 x GBU-10 + 1 x AGM-114 + 2 x GBU-12
Jan. 26	1 x Bell-407 + 1 x Mi-35	Salah ad Din	2 x BDL + 1 x vehicle	12.7mm gun + 70mm rockets
Jan. 26	1 x Bell-407 + 1 x EC-635	Salah ad Din	2 x BDL	12.7mm gun + 70mm rockets
Jan. 30	2 x F-16	Ninewa	2 x caves	2 x GBU-10
Feb. 1	2 x F-16	Salah ad Din	1 x BDL	6 x GBU-12
Feb. 2	1 x AC-208	Salah ad Din	personnel	2 x AGM-114
Feb. 2	1 x AC-208	Salah ad Din	personnel	1 x AGM-114
Feb. 2	2 x F-16	Salah ad Din	4 x BDL	4 x GBU-12
Feb. 2	1 x Bell-407 + 1 x EC-635	Salah ad Din	personnel	12.7mm gun + 70mm rockets
Feb. 3	1 x Bell-407 + 1 x EC-635	Salah ad Din	personnel	12.7mm gun + 70mm rockets
Feb. 3	1 x AC-208	Salah ad Din	personnel	2 x AGM-114

IRAQI AIR FORCE AND ARMY AVIATION COMMAND

Iraqi Aircraft Maintain High Tempo of Strikes on ISIS Targets

CJTF-OIR reported that the Iraqi Air Force and Iraqi Army Aviation Command conducted one more airstrike (31) against ISIS targets compared to the previous quarter (30).¹⁷⁷

Twenty-three of these strikes were performed by the Iraqi Air Force using F-16 or AC-208 fixed wing aircraft, and eight by the Iraqi Army Aviation Command using Bell-407, EC-635, Mi-17, and Mi-35 helicopters.¹⁷⁸ Two of the operational missions were considered deliberately planned, while the rest were dynamic, or ad hoc, strikes.¹⁷⁹ (See Table 4.)

In total, Iraqi F-16s flew 287 sorties, including training and operational flights, during the quarter.¹⁸⁰ The Iraqi F-16 squadrons, which operate Iraq's most sophisticated and capable U.S.-supplied weapon systems, averaged eight training sorties per day when not operationally tasked with combat missions.¹⁸¹ CJTF-OIR said that the objectives for the training sorties included surface attack, close air support, and some night air-to-air sorties utilizing night vision upgrades.¹⁸²

Date	Aircraft	Location	Target	Munition
Feb. 5	1 x AC-208	Salah ad Din	1 x BDL	1 x AGM-114
Feb. 9	1 x Bell-407 + 1 x EC-635	Diyala	personnel	12.7mm gun + 70mm rockets
Feb. 13	2 x F-16	Kirkuk	1 x BDL	2 x GBU-10
Feb. 15	2 x F-16	Kirkuk	1 x BDL	2 x GBU-12
Feb. 16	1 x Bell-407 + 1 x Mi-35	Ninewa	3 x vehicles	12.7mm gun
Feb. 23	2 x F-16	Kirkuk	2 x caves	2 x GBU-12
Feb. 23	1 x AC-208	Kirkuk	personnel	1 x AGM-114
Feb. 28	2 x F-16	Anbar (Jazeera OC)	personnel	2 x GBU-12
Mar. 1	1 x Bell-407 + 1 x Mi-17	Anbar (Jazeera OC)	1 x vehicle	12.7mm gun
Mar. 10	2 x F-16 + 1 x AC-208	Kirkuk	personnel	3 x GBU-12 + 2 x AGM-114
Mar. 29	2 x F-16	Kirkuk	personnel	2 x GBU-10 + 4 x GBU-12
Mar. 31	2 x F-16	Kirkuk	personnel	2 x GBU-12

Munitions Key

GBU-10 – 2,000-pound guided bomb	GBU-12 – 500-pound guided bomb
Mk-84 – 2,000-pound unguided bomb	Mk-82 – 500-pound unguided bomb
AGM-114 – Hellfire guided missile	ZAB – Unguided incendiary bomb
OFAB-500 – 1,100-pound unguided bomb	FAB-500 – 1,100-pound unguided bomb

Source: CJTF-OIR, response to DoD OIG request for information, 22.2 OIR 046, 3/29/2022; CJTF-OIR, response to DoD OIG request for information, 22.2 OIR FOL046, 4/11/2022.

CJTF-OIR reported that there were no changes in the Iraqi Air Force and Iraqi Army Aviation Command's capabilities during the quarter.¹⁸³

In previous quarters, Iraqi Air Force aircraft employed unguided munitions on multiple strike sorties.¹⁸⁴ CJTF-OIR reported that this was not the case during this quarter, with the exception of Iraqi Army helicopters firing unguided rockets. (See Table 4.) CJTF-OIR said that Coalition advisors proposed the use of unguided munitions on deliberate, or pre-planned, targets, but all Iraqi Air Force targets were dynamically targeted and required better accuracy than unguided munitions could provide.¹⁸⁵ In particular, CJTF-OIR noted that the tactically correct use of unguided bombs for planned strikes on stationary targets allows for Iraqi L-159 aircraft to be used.¹⁸⁶ Currently, the L-159s cannot employ guided bombs as they are awaiting targeting pods.¹⁸⁷ The use of Iraqi L-159s, in combination with Iraq's F-16s, is a force multiplier and helps manage F-16 utilization rates and aircrew flight hours. CJTF-OIR added that properly employing unguided bombs is cheaper than using bombs with costly guidance kits and can achieve the same effect.¹⁸⁸

CJTF-OIR said that as a rule, Iraqi Air Force aircraft are mostly used to target ISIS hideouts, commonly referred to as bed-down locations. These hideouts are often struck when enemy



fighters are present, but this quarter the Iraqi Air Force struck a few targets when there was no evidence of enemy presence in order to destroy ISIS support activities.¹⁸⁹ CJTF-OIR reported that the JOC-I achieved its goal to strike more ISIS personnel during the quarter.¹⁹⁰

Iraqi Army Aviation Command helicopters continued to be used as air weapons teams in support of planned ground operations.¹⁹¹ CJTF-OIR noted that while their operational status remained largely unchanged, the Russian-built helicopters operated by the Iraqi Army Aviation Command are serviced with depot level maintenance and parts supplied through Ukraine. CJTF-OIR said that until the war in Ukraine is resolved, those helicopters will remain unsupported at that level and can expect reduced operational status commensurate with the duration of the Ukrainian conflict.¹⁹²

Iraqi Air Force Still Rely on Coalition for Strikes

CJTF-OIR reported that the majority of Iraqi F-16 airstrikes were performed with significant Coalition assistance. This included use of Coalition ISR for pre-strike collection, monitoring of the target site, radio relay, and laser designation during actual strike execution.¹⁹³ Meanwhile, Iraqi helicopters and armed Iraqi ISR (AC-208) completed strikes



An Iraqi SU-25 ground attack jet at Al Asad Air Base, Iraq (U.S. Army photo).

without Coalition support. CJTF-OIR said that the ISF is able to conduct airstrikes with helicopters and armed Iraqi ISR independently, but lacks some integrated capability with their helicopters.¹⁹⁴

One source of the reliance on the Coalition is the ISF's lack of high altitude ISR, which prevents the ISF from planning and executing counter-ISIS air operations with complete independence.¹⁹⁵ Iraqi ISR assets lack endurance (specifically the manned C-208 and KA-350 aircraft) or range (ScanEagle UAVs) compared to Coalition ISR. CJTF-OIR said that the ISF can support some target development independently, but the Iraqi Air Force still relies on Coalition medium-altitude long-endurance UAVs to develop deliberate targets.¹⁹⁶ The ISF's 12 Chinese-made CH-4 medium-altitude long-endurance UAVs remain incapable of conducting missions.¹⁹⁷

CJTF-OIR reported that ISF willingness to use their own ISR in executing operations remained a challenge this quarter, although continued Coalition advisement towards self-reliance achieved incremental gains.¹⁹⁸

According to CJTF-OIR, Coalition air advisors have repeatedly insisted that the ISF should use its own ISR assets (A/RC-208) in coordination with L-159 or F-16 aircraft instead of relying on Coalition ISR to locate and designate targets. Coalition advisors have also discussed with ISF leadership on numerous occasions having Iraqi F-16s find, fix, and finish their own targets. (See Figure 4.) CJTF-OIR said these suggestions are understood and desired by the JOC-I leadership, but are not always feasible because targets develop quickly and Iraq's manned ISR cannot loiter for as long as unmanned ISR. Live training between Iraqi assets would improve the ISF's ability to support its own target development and kinetic air operations.¹⁹⁹

The majority of the analysis feeding the JOC-I targeting cell remains in the hands of Iraq's individual intelligence agencies. The JOC-I mostly provides support through coordinating ISR and offering finish capabilities through the Iraqi Air Force or limited ground forces that are not available to the other Iraqi agencies.²⁰⁰ For example, CJTF-OIR said the most effective operations have relied on human intelligence provided by Iraqi intelligence agencies, such as the Iraqi National Intelligence Service (INIS), and often concern resupply plans for isolated ISIS fighters.²⁰¹ The ISF uses this intelligence and Coalition ISR to follow ISIS back to their bed down locations.²⁰²

CJTF-OIR stated that the MAG does not partner with the INIS and cannot speak with authority or speculate to their ability to conduct targeted operations against ISIS or their relationships with other Iraqi security services. MAG advisors interact with INIS representatives when they come to the JOC-I's operations floor to monitor ISF missions that target ISIS during their resupply drops. These strikes are supported by the Coalition in the same manner as other partner force counter-ISIS engagements, following established rules of engagement, agreed upon procedures, and approval chains through JOC-I leadership.²⁰³

CJTF-OIR said that the ISF is able to conduct airstrikes with helicopters and armed Iraqi ISR independently, but lacks some integrated capability with their helicopters.

OSC-I End-use Monitoring in Iraq

The Arms Export Control Act requires the U.S. Government to conduct end-use monitoring to ensure that foreign end users are complying with the requirements they agreed to as a condition of receiving government-to-government transfers. End-use monitoring can include scheduled inspections, physical inventories, general inquiries, and reviews of accountability records by the U.S. Government.²⁰⁴

During the quarter, end-use monitoring focused on setting conditions and procedures for monitoring night vision devices that had been provided to the Iraqi Ministries of Interior and Defense and the Counter Terrorism Service in conjunction with the U.S. Defense Security Cooperation Agency. In addition, the OSC-I continued its efforts to get end-use monitoring staff access to additional sites so they could conduct further inventories.²⁰⁵

During the quarter, OSC-I tested the Hawkscan website scanning system and confirmed viability and functionality between the Theater Support Center and OSC-I. The Hawkscan system will be used during upcoming inventories, which will provide further feedback to the Defense Security Cooperation Agency. Also, during the quarter, end-use monitoring staff inventoried ISF M1A1 Abrams tanks in the International Zone, High-Mobility Multipurpose Wheeled Vehicles (commonly known as Humvees), UH-1 helicopters, C-130 cargo aircraft, and armored personnel carriers. End-use monitoring activity continued to be hindered by the security environment, and none was conducted in Syria due to security issues.²⁰⁶

During the quarter, OSC-I conducted site visits to both Camp Taji and Balad Air Base for the individual FMS cases. At Balad Air Base, OSC-I also conducted a 100-percent enhanced end use monitoring inventory of all Iraqi F-16s and planned to conduct enhanced end-use monitoring inventories of night vision devices at Balad Air Base and M1A1 Abrams tanks at Camp Taji during the upcoming quarter.²⁰⁷

IRAQI GROUND FORCES

CJTF-OIR reported that the ISF, mainly the Iraqi Ground Forces Command, reported that they conducted 1,127 counter-ISIS basic patrolling and clearance operations during the quarter, a slight increase from 1,036 operations the previous quarter.²⁰⁸ (See Table 5).

Most operations occurred in provinces north and west of Baghdad, where ISIS exploits rugged terrain, including mountains, wadis and deserts, to provide safe haven for its fighters.²⁰⁹ During the quarter, the ISF established a new operations command in Maysan province to combat smuggling between Iraq and Iran.²¹⁰ CJTF-OIR reported that the Iraqi Ground Forces conducted all of their operations against ISIS independently.²¹¹

CJTF-OIR reported that the Ground Forces operations seek to achieve multiple operational objectives, including search and clearance operations and patrols to “show presence”; search and raid operations to prevent sectarian violence; clearing known ISIS locations; securing religious events, reducing tribal violence, and disrupting criminal activity to establish a safe and secure environment; and intelligence-driven operations.²¹²

CJTF-OIR reported that ISF counter-ISIS operations during the quarter resulted in 99 ISIS members killed, 583 wanted people arrested, 132 ISIS hideouts and 15 ISIS tunnels

destroyed, and the capture/reduction of 2,036 mortar or tank rounds, 442 rockets, 1,177 small arms, 1,256 IEDs, 51 vehicles, and 24,284 rounds of light ammunition.²¹³ Forty-one ISF personnel were killed during the operations.²¹⁴ CJTF-OIR noted that most ISIS fighters killed died in airstrikes, not as a result of Ground Forces operations.²¹⁵

CJTF-OIR reported that unfavorable weather impacted ground operations during much of the month of March and that ground forces primarily focused on pre-Ramadan counter-ISIS efforts and security during the Shia religious pilgrimage to Karbala. CJTF-OIR said there were no ISIS-related incidents during the pilgrimage.²¹⁶

JOC-I Commanders Need to Improve Planning and Information Sharing

MAG advisors work with the JOC-I at Union III in Baghdad, and directly observe the JOC-I's capabilities.²¹⁷ The MAG advisors provided the following assessment of JOC-I capabilities:

Command and Control: JOC-I leaders would have better situational awareness of what is happening during an operation if they developed a common operating picture.²¹⁸ To that end, CJTF-OIR provided the JOC-I with 30 SHOUT NANO satellite communication devices that the Ground Forces can use to send real-time information to display on the JOC-I operations floor.²¹⁹ During the quarter, the JOC-I used the SHOUT NANO and Google Earth Pro software to initiate the first iteration of a digital common operating picture that displayed ground units' physical location on a screen via satellite. CJTF-OIR reported that this capability was a significant step forward in enhancing situational awareness and reduced risk in decision-making by JOC-I leadership. However, the JOC-I continued to prefer to track ground forces using a map board and stick pins representing unit locations, which requires constant communications updates between units, operations commands, and the JOC-I. CJTF-OIR said that the MAG did not observe robust efforts on the part of the ISF to sustain the map board battle tracking system.²²⁰

Information Sharing: The JOC-I needs to improve its ability to disseminate orders to and receive accurate information from the provincial operations commands.²²¹ CJTF-OIR reported that there are many command levels between actions at the tactical level and the JOC-I. As a result, some mid-level commanders can “filter or distort information (intentionally or unintentionally), which influences the JOC-I leaders' immediate understanding of the environment” and their decision-making.²²² CJTF-OIR reported that the MAG views information from the operational commands as not “decision quality.”²²³ Information is lacking, often inaccurate, and delayed.²²⁴

Planning: JOC-I staff sections typically do not plan operations together, resulting in operational plans that “appear disjointed or incomplete,” CJTF-OIR said.²²⁵ CJTF-OIR said that some aspects of planning were improving, particularly targeting and the creation of an ISF-led strike cell.²²⁶ CJTF-OIR characterized these steps as nascent force multiplier improvements.²²⁷

Table 5.

ISF (Mainly Ground Forces) Counter-ISIS Operations, January–February 2022

Operations Command	Number of Operations
Karbala	163
Diyala	186
Ninewa-West	115
Kirkuk	127
Baghdad	36
Anbar	96
Basrah	90
Jazeera	77
Samarra	61
Salah ad Din	54
Ninewa	36
Maysan	62
Sumer	24

Source: CJTF-OIR, response to DoD OIG request for information, 22.2 OIR FOL058, 4/11/2022.

After-Action Reviews: The MAG continued to provide after “action reviews” to the JOC-I staff to offer recommendations for improving processes and planning of operations. The recommendations are aligned with the OIR Campaign Plan 2022, which focuses on Iraq-led Strike Cell development; support to Iraq’s air enterprise; logistics and sustainment capabilities; information sharing; and planning.²²⁸

Logistics and Sustainment: Development of these capabilities is under the purview of NATO Mission Iraq. CJTF-OIR reported that the JOC-I does not operate a functioning directorate for sustainment, instead relying on CTEF to procure materiel and equipment. CJTF-OIR informed JOC-I leadership of the need to improve its logistics and sustainment processes. The MAG observed that Ground Forces also lack a holistic logistics picture, which would provide situational awareness and enable commanders to identify and project logistics and sustainment shortfalls and extend the duration of operational missions. CJTF-OIR said that correcting this problem must occur at the ministerial level and that NATO Mission Iraq is working on this with the Ministry of Defense Logistics Chief.²²⁹

During the quarter, lack of a sustainment capability affected recent ISF operations. CJTF-OIR reported that while the ISF was able to deploy reconnaissance units for a 36-hour period, some of the units were unable to start the operation due to a shortage of fuel.²³⁰

Ground Forces Need to Improve Search and Clearance Operations and Use of Indirect Fire

MAG advisors reported that they are not aligned with Iraqi Ground Force Command units, and therefore are unable to provide comprehensive feedback on ground combat operations at the tactical level or detail any improvements the Ground Forces may have made during the quarter.²³¹

However, MAG advisors gain limited insight into the Ground Forces’ capabilities and capacity to conduct operations against ISIS by attending JOC-I evening briefings and weekly Operations and Intelligence briefings.²³² Based on these limited observations, CJTF-OIR reported the following observations about Ground Forces’ capabilities and shortfalls during the quarter:

Search and Clearance Operations: Ground Forces often had limited contact with ISIS during search and clearance operations and often hesitated to maintain contact with ISIS when contact was made.²³³ Ground Forces typically conducted search and clearance operations during daylight, which made them predictable, and when contact with ISIS was likely to be minimal. The MAG was unsure if the Ground Forces conducted night operations during the quarter because there is no mechanism to verify the accuracy of reports submitted by the operational commands.²³⁴ Major ground operations during the quarter did not result in a significant number of ISIS fighters captured or killed, or in significant discovery of ISIS materiel.²³⁵ CJTF-OIR reported that though it had previously observed that Ground Forces’ tactical formations deteriorated when they encountered ISIS fighters, it has not observed this problem since the summer of 2021.²³⁶

Indirect Fire (Artillery and Mortars): The Ground Forces rely on the Iraqi Air Force to strike targets when some targets could be struck more easily—with less coordination and for an extended period—using artillery and mortars. However, artillery remains absent from the Ground Forces’ operational planning.²³⁷

Coalition Advisors Focus on ISF Targeting Process

Coalition air advisors continued to encourage their Iraqi counterparts to develop complete target packages for use by aircrews. CJTF-OIR reported that JOC-I leaders' impatience and pressure from within the Iraqi government to rapidly kill ISIS fighters hinders the development of this type of target package. It is not uncommon for Iraqi F-16 pilots to take-off with minimal information about the impending strike. Many targets continue to develop even while the F-16 aircrews are en route to the target area. As a result, a significant amount of time is then spent while the Iraqi F-16s are airborne trying to provide an understanding of the target and desired effects.²³⁸ Meanwhile, the only individuals with strike approval in the JOC-I chain of command are the Deputy Commander and the Chief of Staff in his absence.²³⁹

CJTF-OIR said that ISF officers at the two-star general-level and below understand the requirement to provide aircrews with detailed and accurate information prior to take-off, but said that this is not always possible when most targets are developed in a dynamic environment. CJTF-OIR said that as the ISF builds its Strike Cell capability, the desire is to include ITACs in the targeting and strike process. CJTF-OIR told the JOC-I that the purpose of developing the Strike Cell is to have trained ISF members providing kill-chain information at the tactical level to build strike situational awareness for the aircrews.²⁴⁰ For now, CJTF-OIR is helping mature a Target Development Cell, which is the first step in the larger effort of building a fully operational ISF-led strike cell within the JOC-I.²⁴¹

CJTF-OIR reported that only dynamic targeting attempts occurred during the quarter, largely due to the fleeting nature of ISIS targets. The ISF understand that deliberate targeting is typically more effective, but dynamic targets are usually what develop. CJTF-OIR assessed that the ISF's processes continue to improve with the support of the Coalition, especially regarding dynamic targeting. CJTF-OIR said that the JOC-I's intelligence and target development cell leadership is very capable, but the cell lacks sufficient personnel to facilitate the consistent and permanent deliberate targeting cycle. According to CJTF-OIR, the targeting process will improve with the addition of more dedicated resources and ISF personnel.²⁴²

CJTF-OIR said that the ISF strike shortfalls are not employment issues and should not reflect negatively on Iraqi aircrews or the JOC-I staff. Instead, there is a broader Iraqi Air Force issue of organizing, training, and equipping aircrews to support operational employment of effects in support of the JOC-I staff. The MAG has no visibility on Iraqi Air Force training, but observations during tactical operations highlight the need for increased training on skills such as coordination between ISR and fighter aircraft, F-16 laser designation, and weapons employment.²⁴³

CJTF-OIR reported that coordination for timely and detailed post-strike ground clearances and sensitive site exploitation by the ISF continues to be an issue. Coalition forces play a large role in coordinating sensitive site exploitation, as only one Iraqi agency, the CTS, has an exploitation lab.²⁴⁴ CJTF-OIR said that the coordination support the Coalition provides is resonating with the ISF. For example, this quarter Iraqi ground forces secured an ISIS vehicle and its contents following an Iraqi airstrike targeting three ISIS fighters. With minimal Coalition involvement, elements from the Iraqi Ministries of Defense and Interior coordinated for the vehicle and contents to be moved to the CTS's exploitation lab the day after the strike. The results of the Iraqi exploitation of captured material were shared weekly between the JOC-I targeting cell leader and Coalition advisors, then briefed to the JOC-I leadership at weekly Operations and Intelligence briefings.²⁴⁵



Sulaymaniyah Asayish SWAT members prepare to load onto a U.S. Army CH-47 Chinook during helicopter assault training. (U.S. Army photo)

Border Police Conduct Joint Operations, Fortify Border with Syria

CJTF-OIR reported that the Border Police conducted multiple joint ambushes with the KSF in areas near where the borders of Syria, Iraq, and the Iraqi Kurdistan Region meet.²⁴⁶ In particular, the Iraqi Border Police conducted 30 joint operations with KSF special forces in January and February.²⁴⁷

CJTF-OIR reported that the Border Police sought to block the movement of ISIS fighters across the Iraq-Syria border and secure the “gap” between territory secured by the Kurdistan Regional Government and territory secured by federal Iraqi forces.²⁴⁸

Local media reported that Iraq undertook steps to tighten its border with Syria during the quarter following the ISIS attack at the Ghwayran Detention Facility in January.²⁴⁹ In March, the Iraqi Army established new posts along the border in Ninewa province.²⁵⁰ The ISF collected intelligence on the movement of militants across the border using thermal cameras and information shared by neighboring countries.²⁵¹ Local news reports quoted Iraqi officials saying that the measures had reduced infiltration of ISIS fighters from Syria.²⁵²

Iraq has been fortifying its 370-mile-long border with Syria by digging a 3-meter-wide and 3-meter-deep trench extending hundreds of miles along the border, building a fence, installing hundreds of fortified watchtowers, and deploying drones and infrared cameras capable of spotting targets at night.²⁵³ CJTF-OIR said that the ISF continued to distribute more than 66,000 rolls of CTEF-funded concertina-wire to construct fencing along the border.²⁵⁴

KURDISH SECURITY FORCES

KSF Reform Focuses on Integration of Kurdish Forces

CJTF-OIR reported that the Ministry of Peshmerga Affairs (MoPA) continued to transfer KSF units (also known as Peshmerga) to MoPA command as part of the Kurdish Regional Government’s efforts to reform the KSF.²⁵⁵ The goal is reorganize and unify the KSF under one non-partisan command.²⁵⁶ Currently, KSF units are divided, with some units under the

command of the two major Kurdish political parties, the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (PUK) or the Kurdistan Democratic Party (KDP), and others under the command of the MoPA.²⁵⁷

During the quarter, the MoPA assumed command of the 2nd Support Forces Command, which was previously aligned with the PUK. The 1st Support Forces Command, previously under KDP command, transferred to the MoPA last quarter.²⁵⁸

These two newly transferred support commands will provide artillery, engineers, armored and anti-tank forces, air defense, and maintenance to the Regional Guard Brigades (RGBs). CJTF-OIR said that the additional capability “significantly enhanced” the RGB’s offensive support, combat engineering capability and ability to task and organize basic combined arms units and formations.²⁵⁹

CJTF-OIR reported that the MoPA was in the process of transferring two additional units to MoPA RGB during the quarter, one from the PUK’s 70s Units and one from the KDP’s 80s Units.²⁶⁰ CJTF-OIR said that the 70s and 80s Units’ leadership plans to transfer additional brigades to the MoPA.²⁶¹ (See Figure 5.)

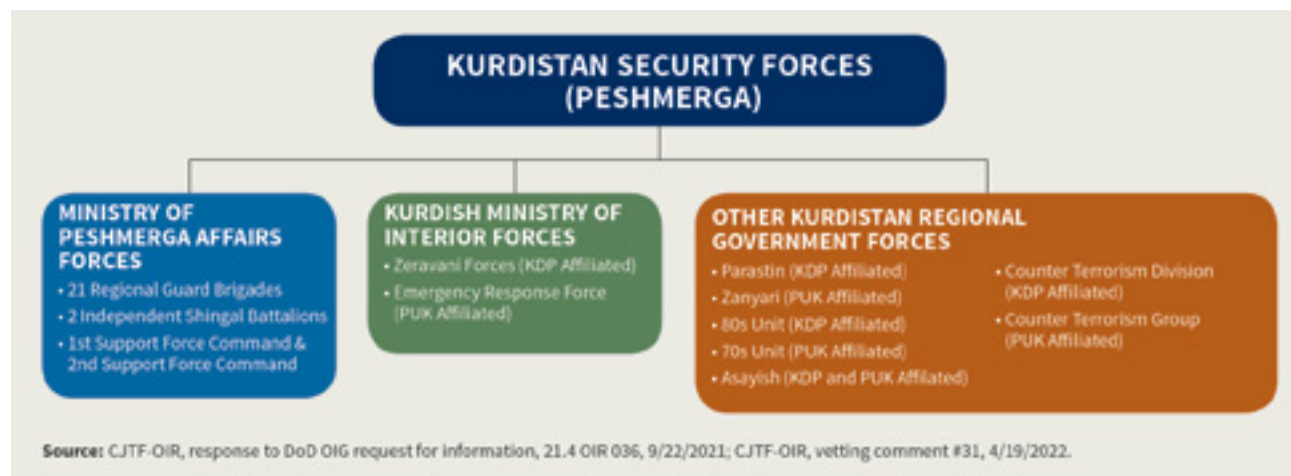
As of the end of the quarter, 47,500 KSF personnel were under MoPA command.²⁶² CJTF-OIR said that the number was expected to grow with the transfer of the two new units coming from the partisan 70s and 80s Units. Separately, the PUK-affiliated 70s Unit was estimated at 40,000-45,000 personnel and the KDP-affiliated 80s Unit included roughly 63,000-68,000 personnel.²⁶³

CJTF-OIR reported that the MoPA has made progress toward other KSF reforms during the quarter, including implementation of an electronic payment system. Eight RGBs, two



Ministry of Peshmerga soldiers participate in a graduation ceremony in Erbil, Iraq. (U.S. Army photo)

Figure 5.

Organization of the Kurdish Security Forces

Shingal battalions, and two training centers had transitioned from cash payments to an electronic funds transfer payment system as of the end of the quarter.²⁶⁴

Ability of Various KSF Forces to Fight ISIS Varies

CJTF-OIR reported that all KSF forces possess the ability to conduct counter-ISIS operations, although at “markedly different levels of competency and success.”²⁶⁵ The RGBs and the 70s and 80s units are conventional forces that predominantly conduct static defense and ground holding activities, such as manning checkpoints, which CJTF-OIR described as “adequate to deter and disrupt significant concerted ISIS efforts at infiltration or facilitation” along a swath of territory known as the Kurdistan Coordination Line (KCL).²⁶⁶ Security in this area is a “chief concern” for CJTF-OIR because ISIS has long exploited the lack of the security in the area to provide safe haven for its fighters and stage attacks along the KCL and adjacent areas.²⁶⁷

CJTF-OIR reported that the greatest constraint on the KSF is the “inadequacy” of its operational level of command and control and associated processes.²⁶⁸ MAG advisers reported some progress toward integrating KSF capabilities, including the establishment of a nascent targeting process that can fuse KSF intelligence and inform operational planning beyond the conduct of small-unit framework operations.²⁶⁹ MAG advisors are also working to enhance the operations of the General Directorate for Media and National Awareness and the MoPA Media Cell by advising on how to operate more effectively in the information environment and encouraging coordination with the Iraqi Security Media Cell in Baghdad.²⁷⁰

KSF Units Conducted Thousands of Counter-ISIS Operations, Some Partnered with Coalition Forces

CJTF-OIR reported that KSF units conducted counter-ISIS operations on a daily basis across the Iraqi Kurdistan Region. The RGBs conducted most of the operations, which

included presence patrols, clearance patrols, observation posts, erection of temporary checkpoints, and reconnaissance missions.²⁷¹ (See Table 6.)

While the Coalition mainly advised KSF units during the quarter, Coalition forces occasionally partnered with some KSF units. In January and February, partnered operations included five intelligence-gathering operations and three ground operations with the PUK-affiliated Counter Terrorism Group; a medical evacuation operation with the Zerevani, a KDP-affiliated police unit; and two ground operations with the RGBs.²⁷²

Table 6.

Independent KSF Operations During the Quarter, by Unit

Unit	Number of Operations
Regional Guard Brigades (MoPA)	5,651
80s Forces (KDP affiliated)	861
Zerevani Forces (KDP affiliated)	572
Emergency Response Force (PUK affiliated)	255
70s Forces (PUK affiliated)	177
TOTAL	7,516

Sources: CJTF-OIR, response to DoD OIG request for information, 22.2 OIR 061, 3/23/2022 and 22.2 OIR FOL061, 4/11/2022.

Joint ISF-KSF Brigades Stalled by Delays in Government Formation

The stalled government formation process in Iraq, and the resulting lack of a new budget, slowed development of the ISF-KSF Joint Force Brigade and payment of salaries to the KSF.²⁷³ (See page 48.) The Joint Force Brigade will provide security along the Kurdistan Coordination Line (KCL), where ISIS has exploited gaps in security force presence.²⁷⁴ As of the end of the quarter, the MoPA was waiting for funds from the Iraqi government to facilitate training, equipping, and salary payments to the KSF’s 20th RGB assigned to the joint force.²⁷⁵

CJTF-OIR reported that the Kurdistan Regional Government is “distracted” by increased friction between the two main Kurdish political parties during the government formation process.²⁷⁶ CJTF-OIR said that MAG advising efforts were minimally impacted because the MAG in Erbil supports only non-partisan KSF units.²⁷⁷ The MAG continued to work with the MoPA to establish the Joint Force Brigades and to support KSF efforts to coordinate with the ISF.²⁷⁸

Despite the slowed progress in forming the Joint Force Brigade, ISF and KSF forces continued to conduct joint operations along the KCL during the quarter, including three joint clearance operations and four joint reconnaissance operations, CJTF-OIR said.²⁷⁹ In addition, ISF and KSF units coordinated several other counter-ISIS missions. Some of these missions included the politically aligned 70s and 80s Units and the Border Police.²⁸⁰

CJTF-OIR said that coordination between units on the ground is “a matter of routine, with the level of coordination decreasing at higher echelons.”²⁸¹ In particular, KSF leaders demonstrate limited ability to plan and synchronize operations. Therefore, joint operations with the ISF are limited to “basic battlespace de-confliction” rather than cooperation on larger efforts.²⁸² CJTF-OIR said that disunity within the KSF forces did not impact KSF-ISF ability to conduct coordinated and joint operations at the lower echelons.²⁸³

Role of Third Parties

IRAN-ALIGNED MILITIAS LIMIT ATTACKS ON U.S. AND COALITION INTERESTS DURING GOVERNMENT FORMATION PROCESS

The Defense Intelligence Agency (DIA) reported that Iran-backed militias continued to pose a threat to U.S. personnel in Iraq. The militias maintained the ability to conduct rocket, UAV, and IED attacks against U.S. and Coalition interests. In early January, militias targeted Al Asad Air Base with multiple UAVs and at least five rockets. Since then, the militias mostly refrained from conducting further attacks, but have continued to threaten U.S. forces in public statements.²⁸⁴ The DIA assessed that the latest pause in attacks is likely due to the militias attempting to manage escalation and avoid actions that would weaken their domestic political position during the government formation process.²⁸⁵

USCENTCOM said that January was projected to be the start of the Iran-aligned militia campaign to force U.S. forces out of Iraq, but that the UAV attacks only occurred in early January. USCENTCOM also assessed that the militias likely paused attacks in February and March due to a desire to focus on retaining influence within the Iraqi government following their poor performance in the October 2021 election. Many key militia leaders are heavily involved in the government formation process and prioritize retaining influence in government over the campaign to remove U.S. forces.²⁸⁶

USCENTCOM reported that IED attacks against Iraqi-driven Coalition logistics convoys have been evolving in lethality, complexity, and consistency, with a total of 39 IED attacks during the quarter. More sophisticated IEDs, such as explosively formed penetrators and multi-arrayed IEDs, were used with the intent to disable the convoys and damage cargo. The militias targeted convoys at the beginning and end of their route along a highway connecting Baghdad to Kuwait. USCENTCOM added the militia-affiliated front groups are almost exclusively claiming responsibility for attacks against U.S. and Coalition forces in Iraq, making true attribution difficult to ascertain. Some of the groups that claim IED attacks includes al-Wilaya, Ashab al-Kahf, Thar al-Muhandis Brigade, and al-Sabiqun Battalion.²⁸⁷

CJTF-OIR reported that Iran and Iran-aligned militias did not have a major or sustained impact on ISF-led counter-ISIS operations during the quarter. However, CJTF-OIR said that since Coalition forces provided the majority of the ISR supporting these operations, the ability to support Iraqi targeting efforts was affected when Iran-backed militias attacked Coalition bases. For example, the attacks on Al Asad Air Base in January temporarily reduced the Coalition's ability to provide ISR support to ISF counter-ISIS efforts.²⁸⁸

The militias also attacked U.S. diplomatic facilities. The DoS reported one militia attack targeting the U.S. Embassy in the Baghdad International Zone and three separate attacks targeting the Baghdad Diplomatic Support Center (BDSC) at the Baghdad International Airport. No U.S. personnel were injured during the attacks, and the Embassy sustained minor property damage.²⁸⁹

The DoS and former USCENTCOM Commander, General Kenneth F. McKenzie, credited U.S. counter-UAV and counter-rocket, artillery, and mortar (commonly known as C-RAM) systems for defending U.S. and Coalition facilities during the quarter.²⁹⁰ All three of the UAV attacks

(continued on next page)

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

that USCENTCOM reported occurred in January were shot down, including two UAVs that targeted the BDSC on January 3 and three UAVs that target Al Asad Air Base on January 4 and 6.²⁹¹ The DoS also noted that the ISF stationed air defense systems in and around the International Zone, which hosts the U.S. Embassy, Union III, and Iraqi government offices, in response to the November 2021 attempted assassination of Iraqi Prime Minister Mustafa al-Kadhimi using armed UAVs.²⁹² CJTF-OIR said that while the Iraqi Air Defense Command positioned multiple air defense platforms in the greater Baghdad area and in the vicinity of Balad Air Base, any protection of Coalition forces is provided by their proximity to Iraqi sites rather than by Iraqi intent.²⁹³

IRAN LAUNCHES MISSILE ATTACK ON SITES IN ERBIL

On March 13, Iran launched at least 12 ballistic missiles, from Iranian territory, that hit the outskirts of Erbil, near the new U.S. consulate compound that is under construction. In a statement, Iran's Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps claimed responsibility for the attack against what it described as an Israeli intelligence outpost in Erbil.²⁹⁴ The building struck was the residence of a prominent businessman well known to U.S. officials. In addition, the headquarters of Kurdistan 24 News, which is affiliated with Kurdistan Regional Government Prime Minister Masrour Barzani, was also damaged.²⁹⁵

The DoS said that as many as nine of the ballistic missiles struck in the vicinity of the new U.S. consulate compound but reported no U.S. injuries or damage to U.S. facilities.²⁹⁶ CJTF-OIR reported that the attack did not target U.S. or Coalition forces and had no impact on the Coalition, the OIR mission, or force protection requirements.²⁹⁷

IRAN-ALIGNED MILITIAS INCREASINGLY USE IRAQI TERRITORY TO LAUNCH ATTACKS ON NEIGHBORING STATES

The DIA reported that militias in Iraq demonstrated the capability and willingness to target Gulf states with long-range weapons in support of Iran and other Iranian allies in the region. In February, an Iraq-based group claimed responsibility for launching three UAVs in an attack targeting Abu Dhabi. The attack, which the United Arab Emirates Ministry of Defense claimed it intercepted, likely originated from Iraq.²⁹⁸ The DIA assessed that the attack was probably a show of solidarity with the Iran-backed Houthis, which are fighting the United Arab Emirates in Yemen. The same militia group claimed responsibility for a similar attack in 2021 on the Yamamah Palace in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia.²⁹⁹

Meanwhile, Iran-aligned militias increased attacks against Turkish forces in Iraq and Syria. The DIA assessed that the militias probably will continue to coordinate with the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK), a U.S.-designated foreign terrorist organization, in response to Turkish air and UAV strikes on PKK positions. Prominent militias have become increasingly outspoken against Turkish actions and have launched rocket attacks on Turkish military bases in Iraq and Syria. Following Turkish airstrikes in February that targeted the PKK in northern Iraq, a new Iran-aligned militia group conducted a rocket attack against a Turkish expeditionary base north of Mosul. The DIA said the militias probably calculate that their attacks against Turkey will deter Turkey from attacking the PKK in federal Iraq while enhancing their public image as defenders of Iraqi sovereignty.³⁰⁰

IRAQI GOVERNMENT RELUCTANT TO TARGET MILITIAS DURING GOVERNMENT FORMATION

Despite the spate in Iran-aligned militia attacks in January and the attack on the residence of Iraq's prime minister last quarter, the DIA reported that no remarkable change in the relationship between the Iraqi government and the Popular Mobilization Forces (PMF), an umbrella organization that includes many Iran-aligned militias. The DIA assessed that Prime Minister al-Kadhimi almost

certainly refrained from targeting Iran-aligned militias to avoid risking an outbreak of violence during government formation, despite suspicions that militants conducted multiple attacks against political rivals and the Coalition this quarter.³⁰¹

The DIA said that judging from press reporting, Iran-aligned militants were probably responsible for the November 2021 attack on the prime minister's residence. The leaders of two militias, Asa'ib Ahl al-Haq and Kata'ib Sayyid al-Shuhada, threatened the prime minister days before the attack. The DIA assessed that the motivation for the attack likely stemmed from accusations that Prime Minister al-Kadhimi was responsible for the deaths of pro-militia demonstrators killed by the ISF during a violent protest over parliamentary election results in November. Iran-aligned militia groups have previously conducted similar attacks using UAVs including against the U.S. Embassy in Baghdad, and the Erbil International Airport.³⁰²

Initially, Iraqi authorities considered arresting three militia members attack on the prime minister's residence, but no arrests were made. According to the DIA, an investigatory commission separately charged and detained eight Iraqi officers, including two generals, in mid-November for evidence-tampering and negligence in failing to lift fingerprints from the UAV used in the attack prior to its destruction. However, all detainees were released by mid-December.³⁰³

According to the DIA, the Iraqi government's ability to assert control or accountability over the Popular Mobilization Forces remains tenuous, with no discernable change during the quarter. The DIA reported that ISF units remained committed to the Iraqi government and followed orders, including during joint operations with Popular Mobilization Forces units. During the quarter, Baghdad issued no orders for action against Iran-aligned militias, leaving the DIA unable to assess any changes in ISF commanders' willingness to confront the militias.³⁰⁴

Citing press reports, the DIA said that the Popular Mobilization Committee and its affiliated Shia militias maintain some influence within the Iraqi parliament and government ministries through its affiliation with the al-Fatah Alliance political bloc, which they leverage to safeguard their interests. The DIA assessed that the militias are also able to exert influence in Iraq's judiciary through intimidation tactics and by leveraging sympathetic judges.³⁰⁵

Additional information about the role of third parties in Iraqi security can be found in the classified appendix to this report.

POLITICS AND ECONOMICS

The U.S. Government, through the DoS, coordinates traditional diplomacy and public diplomacy programs to ensure Iraq's stability and enable reconstruction. The DoS said that this engagement is necessary to combat malign foreign influence, particularly from Iran. The U.S. Government also supports Iraqi efforts to ensure a more responsive government and reduce corruption; foster private sector-led economic growth and job creation; and strengthen civil society groups so that they can operate freely.³⁰⁶

GOVERNANCE

Government Formation Stalls

Negotiations to form an Iraqi government, which have progressed slowly since parliamentary elections in October, dominated all policy and political activity during the quarter. The negotiations have stalled since January 9, when the parliament convened for its initial session and reelected Mohamed al-Halbousi speaker to a second term with a clear majority.³⁰⁷

The stalemate has occurred because the two main Kurdish political parties, the KDP and the PUK, cannot agree on a candidate for president, a role that has traditionally been reserved for a Kurd. The KDP nominated Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG) Minister of Interior, Rebar Ahmed, after the Iraqi Federal Supreme Court disqualified the KDP's first candidate as old corruption charges against him resurfaced. The PUK backed incumbent Barham Salih for a second term.³⁰⁸

Meanwhile, two political blocs competed to form the next government. The Tripartite Alliance is a cross-sectarian coalition that includes the Sadrism Trend, led by Shia cleric Muqtada al-Sadr; the Sovereignty Alliance, led by Sunni Speaker al-Halbousi; and the KDP. Al-Sadr seeks to form a majority government with Kurdish and Sunni allies but without other Shia parties.³⁰⁹

The Coordination Framework is a rival group of Shia political parties, most of whom are backed by Iran and lost seats in the 2021 elections. The Framework includes the Fatah Alliance, which includes parties associated with the Popular Mobilization Forces; Ammar al-Hakim's Hikma bloc, which until it lost seats in the elections was opposed to Iran-aligned militia influence in Iraqi politics; former Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki's State of Law coalition; and former Prime Minister Haider al-Abadi's Nasr coalition. The Coordination Framework seeks to form a consensus government, which would allow it to stay in power and receive a share of positions in the new government.³¹⁰

The Iraqi parliament attempted three times in March to vote on a new president, but was unable to achieve a quorum.³¹¹ The Federal Supreme Court ruled in February that two-thirds of the parliament's 329 members must be present to vote on a new president. Without a president, the parliament cannot take the next step to name a prime minister-elect to

Negotiations to form an Iraqi government, which have progressed slowly since parliamentary elections in October, dominated all policy and political activity during the quarter.

form a new government. The Coordination Framework boycotted the vote to prevent the Tripartite Alliance from electing a president.³¹²

According to media reports, al-Sadr said that he would suspend efforts to form a new government for 40 days, but also asked his supporters not to interfere with the Coordination Framework's efforts to form a government.³¹³

Additional information about the Iraqi government formation process is available in the classified appendix to this report.

Iraqi Government Attempts to Address Protesters' Concerns

Protests against government corruption, the weak economy, and unemployment continued during the quarter. Teachers in Sulaymaniyah province went on strike over unpaid wages.³¹⁴ Residents of Nasiriyah province protested rising food prices. To help soften the impact of food costs, the government granted \$70 monthly to pensioners and low-income civil servants and implemented a 2-month suspension of customs duties on basic commodities, such as food products, essential consumables, and construction materials.³¹⁵

On March 27, the government transferred \$137 million to the KRG. The payment will allow the KRG Ministry of Finance to pay civil servants' salaries—including those of the striking teachers in Sulaymaniyah—in early April, about one week behind schedule.³¹⁶ Salaries and payments to contractors and suppliers in the province were also months behind. This has led to sporadic protests and suspension of services such as refuse collection. Hospitals are also running low on medicine and other consumable items due to lack of payment.³¹⁷

The Iraqi government also continued to take action against security forces personnel accused of responding with force during nationwide protests beginning in October 2019, during which hundreds of Iraqi protesters have been killed. In February, the Nasiriyah Investigation Court arrested and charged Lieutenant Colonel Omar Nazar of the Ministry of Interior's Emergency Response Division with direct involvement in killing protesters during a November 2019 demonstration in Nasiriyah. The Emergency Response Division has been accused of earlier human rights abuses and has been ineligible for assistance since 2015, consistent with the Leahy Law.³¹⁸

Iraq Pays Final Installment of UN Compensation Claims to Kuwait

In January, Iraq made a final payment of \$630 million to Kuwait as part of a multi-decade process during which Iraq paid a total of \$52.4 billion in claims related to Iraq's 1990 invasion of Kuwait.³¹⁹ Going forward, Iraq is no longer required to pay a percentage of its oil revenues to the UN Compensation Commission.³²⁰ According to the UN Compensation Commission, which oversaw the compensation, Iraq paid compensation to private individuals, companies, government organizations, and other groups for losses resulting from the invasion.³²¹

In January, Iraq made a final payment of \$630 million to Kuwait as part of a multi-decade process during which Iraq paid a total of \$52.4 billion in claims related to Iraq's 1990 invasion of Kuwait.

Turkey-PKK Conflict Contributes to Instability

During the quarter, the Turkish military and the PKK continued to conduct military operations against each other, according to media reports and the DoS. Turkey employed air, drone, and artillery strikes during the quarter against Kurdish targets in northern Iraq, drawing condemnation from the Iraqi government. The PKK's operations also drew condemnation from the Iraqi government. Iran-aligned militias, at times in cooperation with the PKK, attacked Turkish military bases located in Iraq.³²²

The ongoing conflict between Turkey and the PKK contributes to instability in northern Iraq. It divides Iraq's Kurds: the Kurdistan Democratic Party, which is the largest party in the KRG, maintains close ties to Turkey and is at odds with the PKK. Kurdish President Nechirvan Barzani, a leader of the KDP, met with Turkish President Erdogan on at least two occasions, once immediately after an early-February Turkish strike on a military target near the Makhmur refugee camp in Ninewa province and again in mid-March, the day before the Iranian missile strike on Erbil.³²³ The KDP's rival Patriotic Union of Kurdistan party has historically had closer ties with Iran and displayed a level of sympathy for the PKK.³²⁴ In recent years, the PKK has forged close relations with some of the Iran-aligned militias that belong to Iraq's Popular Mobilization Forces.³²⁵

While Turkey has maintained military bases in the Iraqi Kurdistan Region for many years and has used manned aircraft against the PKK, it has recently pursued a drone-based strategy that has enabled it to go after high-ranking PKK leaders in Iraq and Syria.³²⁶ During the quarter, Iran-aligned militias attacked some Turkish bases in Iraq.³²⁷

While Turkish strikes have historically targeted the Qandil mountains in northeastern Iraq, where the PKK has its stronghold, they have increasingly targeted the Makhmur mountains further west, as well as Sinjar, part of the Kurdish Coordination line, a swath of territory near the KRG that is home to Iraq's Yazidi population.³²⁸ Sinjar has historically been under the control of the KDP, but since 2017, the KDP has dominated only the eastern half of Sinjar, while the PKK has established a presence in Sinjar's west with the help of a Yazidi militia known as the Sinjar Resistance Units that maintains close ties to Iran-aligned militias.³²⁹

According to a 2020 agreement between the KRG and Iraq's federal government, PKK and Sinjar Resistance Unit forces are supposed to be replaced by the ISF. However, the agreement has not been executed and the Sinjar Resistance Units continue to govern western Sinjar and provide sanctuary for the PKK.³³⁰ During the quarter, the Sinjar Resistance Units clashed with the ISF, demanding the closure of Iraqi government offices in Sinjar and burning down an ISF checkpoint, according to media reports.³³¹

Turkey, seeing the Sinjar Resistance Units as a proxy for the PKK, has attacked it (as well as PMF militias). A DoS cable reported that social media, as reported in a DoS cable, said in early March, that the head of the Popular Mobilization Commission, Falih al-Fayyadh, paid a "discreet visit" to Turkey related to the Turkish military's targets in Sinjar.³³²

Iraq Takes Steps to Limit Economic Activity with Russia

According to media reports, Iraq abstained from the March 2 UN General Assembly vote to condemn the Russian invasion of Ukraine, joining 34 other countries. According to media reports, some of Iraq's political elite hesitate to disrupt relations with Russia, which has invested \$14 billion in Iraq, mostly in the energy sector.³³³

However, the DoS reported that the government took steps in March to limit economic activity with Russia.³³⁴ For instance, Iraq's Central Bank sent a letter advising Iraqi ministries to postpone finalizing contracts with Russian companies and refrain from transferring payments that go through the Russian financial system.³³⁵

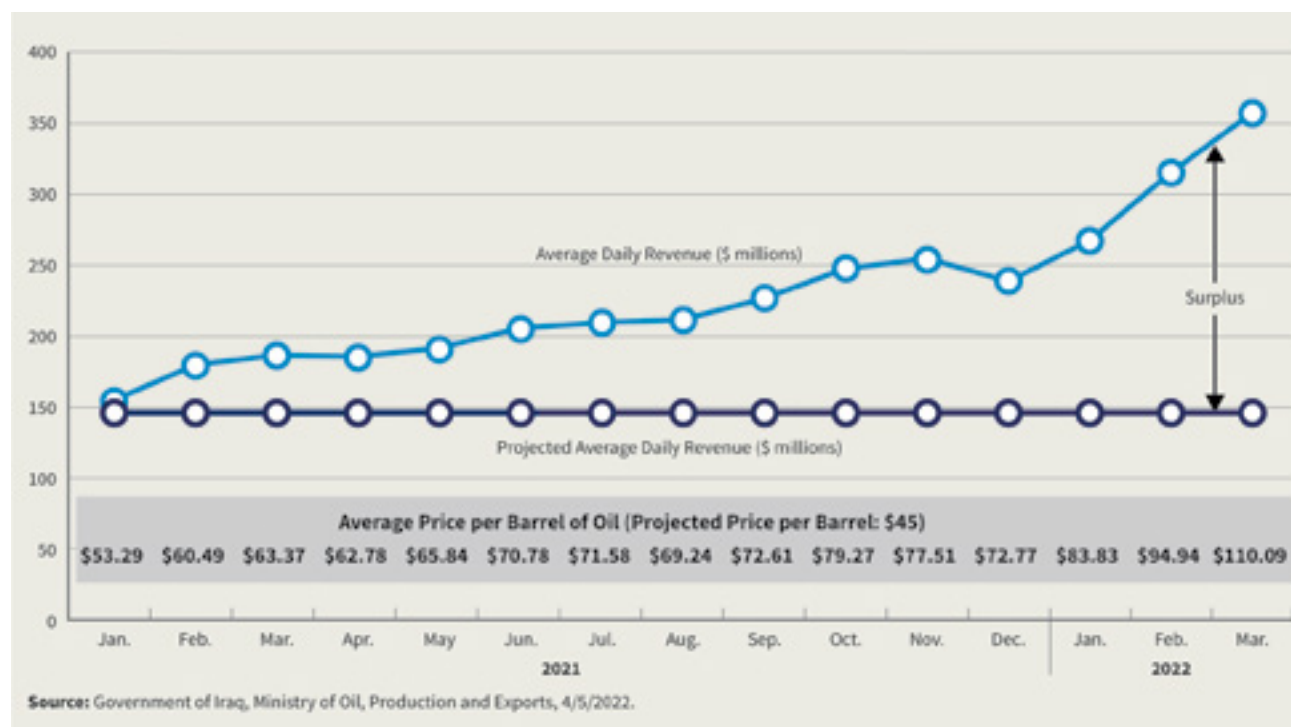
Iraq Oil Revenues Soar Above 2021 Projections

As of the end of the quarter, the Iraqi government had not approved a federal budget for 2022. The DoS said it is unlikely the budget will be considered until the new government is formed. In the interim, the government is being funded with a month-to-month allocation at the level approved in the 2021 budget. During this period, the acting ministers have had limited authority to perform their duties.³³⁶

Oil export revenues, which fund the most of Iraqi government operations, continued to exceed levels projected in the 2021 federal budget. According to the Iraqi Ministry of Oil,

Figure 6.

Actual vs. Projected Daily Oil Revenue, Monthly Average, in \$ Millions, January 2021–March 2022



monthly revenues for March were the highest since 1972.³³⁷ During the quarter, the average price per barrel exceeded each of the preceding months in calendar year 2021.³³⁸ (See Figure 6.)

Federal Supreme Court Strikes Down KRG Authority to Sell Oil

On February 15, Iraq's Federal Supreme Court struck down the legal authority of the KRG to independently manage oil and gas, which is the KRG's primary source of revenue, and directed the KRG to transfer control to the federal government in Baghdad.³³⁹ The court also allows Baghdad to review oil production sharing contracts signed by the KRG and challenge the validity of these contracts in court.³⁴⁰ Media reported that it is unlikely that Kurdish authorities will comply with the court's ruling. Kurdish President Barzani said the court's ruling exacerbated the years-long dispute between the federal government and the KRG over the Kurdish region's oil and gas policy.³⁴¹

According to the DoS, the Federal Supreme Court's ruling has so far had no impact; oil and gas production continued during the quarter as usual. The DoS said that the KRG needs to now mitigate the risk faced by the companies they have under contract by finding a political solution to the dispute with the federal government. In the interim, the DoS said the federal government could offer assurances to foreign oil companies that KRG financial or contractual obligations will be honored while negotiations between the KRG and federal government take place.³⁴² According to a media report, on March 24, the Ministry of Oil proposed establishing the Kurdistan National Oil Company, under federal Iraq ownership, as an initial step to implementing the Federal Supreme Court's decision.³⁴³

STABILIZATION

The U.S. Government seeks to establish stability in Iraq so that the Iraqi government can suppress future insurgencies and violent extremist organizations at the local government and law enforcement levels. The U.S. Government funds programs in Iraq that seek to accelerate restoration of essential services in conflict-affected areas of Iraq. In addition, the U.S. Government assists ethnic and religious minority communities and supports programs that help displaced persons return safely and voluntarily to their places of origin or settle in other destinations of their choosing.³⁴⁴ (See Table 7.)

On March 30, USAID announced the seven winners of the Iraq Call for Innovations implemented through the Water and Energy for Food Grand Challenge. The announcement stated that "the selected Iraq-based enterprises will receive a total of \$1.5 million in customized financial, technical, and investment support to expand their business, combat resource scarcity, and advance Iraq's transition to a green economy."³⁴⁵

DISPLACED PERSONS

IDP Camps Face Funding Shortfalls

In late November 2021, the Iraqi government announced plans to discontinue its humanitarian assistance in the 26 remaining internally displaced persons (IDP) camps in the Iraqi Kurdistan Region and federal Iraq, reportedly due to financial shortfalls.³⁴⁶ Until

Table 7.

USAID Stabilization Activities During the Quarter

Program	Activity
United Nations Development Programme Funding Facility for Stabilization Seeks to restore essential services in the liberated provinces of Anbar, Diyala, Kirkuk, Ninewa, and Salah ad Din through the rehabilitation of public infrastructure damaged or destroyed by ISIS.	Approved \$4,811,400 for 17 activities to restore essential services through the rehabilitation of public infrastructure and housing in Kirkuk and Salah ad Din provinces. Approved \$2,013,433 for two activities to restore access to potable water in Sinjar and one activity to rehabilitate a municipal canal in Qaraqosh city in Ninewa province to support the recovery and return of religious and ethnic minority communities.
Iraq Community Resilience Initiative Seeks to restore service delivery, rebuild livelihoods, and support efforts to reduce community tension and increase positive social interactions between diverse groups.	Approved \$3,360,147 for 29 activities to promote stability in Iraq by improving the delivery of public services, expanding livelihoods, and improving social conditions that promote a shared Iraqi identity. Areas of implementation during the quarter included Basrah, Nasiriya, Dhi Qar, Sinjar, Mosul, Anbar, Baghdad, and several national civil society and media activities.

Sources: USAID ME Bureau, response to USAID OIG request for information, 3/22/2022; USAID, “Funding Facility for Stabilization,” 7/14/2021; USAID, “Annex B. Iraq Community Resilience Initiative Highlights,” undated; USAID, website, “Iraq: Stabilization,” 4/1/2021; USAID, vetting comment, 4/18/2022.

a new Iraqi government is in place, the KRG will have limited resources to fund camps in the Iraqi Kurdistan region because it relies on the government formation process and budget agreement to secure funding.³⁴⁷

Jeddah 5—the last IDP camp in federal Iraq—was home to more than 943 households during the quarter, according to USAID.³⁴⁸ While the Iraqi government announced its intention to close Jeddah 5 by the end of December 2021, according to media reporting, the camp has remained open.³⁴⁹ USAID reported no new announcements about the camp’s imminent closure during the quarter.³⁵⁰

UN actors reported that the KRG has no stated plans to close the 25 camps in the Iraqi Kurdistan Region according to USAID.³⁵¹ USAID said that the humanitarian community is concerned that the KRG will not be able to cover lost funding from the Iraqi government.³⁵² The DoS said the preponderance of financial support for camp operations is provided by the international community, which would lessen any impact of the discontinuation of federal Iraq funds.³⁵³ However, USAID said that donor funding has been decreasing for the last few years and expressed that the limited donor funding is not sufficient to meet the funding shortfalls in the camps.³⁵⁴

According to a U.S. Government update, the United Nations has appealed for additional funding from donors to bridge the funding gaps. However, projected donor contributions for 2022 were not expected to alleviate funding gaps until later in the year. During the quarter, USAID worked with implementers to redirect USAID resources to address some gaps.³⁵⁵

For example, USAID worked with an implementer to redirect current resources to cover water, sanitation, and hygiene service gaps in two IDP camps in the Iraqi Kurdistan Region. Additionally, USAID was able to expedite a portion of its FY 2022 funding to provide food assistance in camps to address anticipated food assistance gaps.³⁵⁶

Iraqi Government Continues Repatriation Efforts, but Security Concerns Pose a Barrier to Return

The international community continued to monitor Iraqi government efforts to repatriate Iraqi refugees from the al-Hol camp in Syria to the Jeddah 1 camp in Iraq's Ninewa province during the quarter.³⁵⁷ As of early February, 448 households had moved from al-Hol to Jeddah 1. Of those, 123 households had departed Jeddah 1 to return to their areas of origin or relocate as of the end of the quarter. At the current rate, according to the DoS, it would take nearly 15 years to repatriate all Iraqis from the al-Hol camp to Iraq.³⁵⁸

DoS PRM said that the displaced persons face many challenges, including a lack of assurance that they will be protected in their communities, lack of shelter and housing, the inability to access livelihood opportunities, and the absence of basic services in their areas of origin. Most displaced people continue to live on daily wages³⁵⁹ In addition, lack of documentation, such as birth certificates, particularly for children of women forcibly married to ISIS fighters in Syria, remains a critical barrier to services and also leads to potential "statelessness."³⁶⁰

USAID reported that tribal leaders, mukhtars (village mayors), and communities often require households with a perceived affiliation to ISIS to obtain sponsorship—usually from relatives or community leaders in their area of origin—as a prerequisite for their return. Returning households often fear reprisal attacks from the community due to perceived affiliation with ISIS. In addition, returning households must receive a clearance from the Ministry of Displacement and Migration, which involves sharing information about the families and sponsors with security services. USAID reported that this process does not always alleviate the concerns of returning households about real or perceived threats to their safety. For example, some households cleared to depart Jeddah 1 during the quarter received threatening phone calls from unknown telephone numbers claiming that they would be targeted if they returned.³⁶¹

U.S. Government Implementers Provide Assistance in Jeddah 1

During the quarter, staff from the DoS visited IDP camps to meet with humanitarian partners, who reported they had not experienced undue challenges accessing either Jeddah 1 or 5 camps.³⁶² The DoS said the United States continues to engage with the Iraqi government on the importance of continuing the repatriation of Iraqi families from al-Hol to Iraq. Further, the United States continues to fund programs that focus on supporting returns, social cohesion, and reintegration of families into their home communities.³⁶³

During the quarter, USAID and DoS Bureau of Population, Refugees, and Migration (PRM) supported humanitarian partners working the Jeddah 1. USAID funded an implementer in Jeddah 1 camp to support camp management, maintain infrastructure, and winterize camp structures. USAID also funded mental health and psychosocial service consultations and counseling; psychological first aid; and group support activities; among other services. USAID coordinated with DoS PRM, which funds the same implementer, to provide social cohesion and reintegration programming.³⁶⁴ U.S. Government agencies encourage the Iraqi government to focus on durable solutions for IDPs that include safe and dignified voluntary returns, local integration, or resettlement to another location or country.³⁶⁵

Roundtables Held on Repatriations from al-Hol Camp

During the quarter, the UN International Organization for Migration (IOM) organized roundtables to discuss and provide expert guidance on aspects of screening, rehabilitation, and reintegration, and how these might be applied in the specific context of Iraqi nationals returning from al-Hol camp.³⁶⁶

The first two roundtables held in late-February were held primarily with security actors, including the representatives of the Iraqi Office of the National Security Council, the Supreme Judicial Council, and the JOC-I.³⁶⁷ One roundtable focused on screening, risk assessment, and needs assessments, with a particular focus on processes with minors and adult women.³⁶⁸ The other roundtable examined the rehabilitation of adults and minors. It emphasized that confidence, trust, and voluntary participation in the rehabilitation programs are vital to their success.³⁶⁹

A third roundtable, which took place in March, outlined the role of the community in receiving returnees as well as good practices and common challenges for the reintegration of adults and minors.³⁷⁰

HUMANITARIAN ASSISTANCE

During the quarter, 961,000 people in Iraq were in acute need of humanitarian assistance, according to the United Nations.³⁷¹ USAID's Bureau for Humanitarian Assistance (BHA) provides humanitarian assistance to vulnerable Iraqis affected by conflict, including, but not limited to, those displaced by violence, by providing life-saving aid, including food assistance, water, sanitation and hygiene, shelter, and emergency healthcare services.³⁷² DoS PRM provides assistance to vulnerable refugees and displaced persons. (See Tables 8 and 9.)

The 2022 United Nations Humanitarian Response Plan for Iraq, published in March, outlines three strategic objectives to enable IDPs and returnees to live in safety and dignity, access essential services, and to meet basic needs.³⁷³ According to the plan, humanitarian interventions will be coordinated through eight humanitarian clusters, Coordination and Common Services, and the Cash Working Group for multipurpose cash assistance, and will cost an estimated \$400 million.³⁷⁴

FOOD PRICES

Russia's War in Ukraine Causes Price Increases in Iraq

The Russian invasion of Ukraine contributed to increases in the prices of staple foods in Iraq during the quarter. USAID reported that the prices of cooking oil, flour, rice, and sugar increased across Iraq—cooking oil increasing by nearly 50 percent, flour by 25 percent, and rice by nearly 10 percent.³⁷⁵ One media outlet reported that since the conflict began, prices of many food items and construction materials imported from Ukraine have increased by 20 to 50 percent.³⁷⁶ While Iraq produces cooking oil and flour, production depends heavily on imports of raw materials including sunflower oil and wheat from Ukraine.³⁷⁷

USAID reported that the prices of cooking oil, flour, rice, and sugar increased across Iraq—cooking oil increasing by nearly 50 percent, flour by 25 percent, and rice by nearly 10 percent

Table 8.

DoS-funded Humanitarian Assistance Activities During the Quarter

Program	Activity
<p>UNHCR FY 2021 amount: \$90,190,000</p> <p>Leads the humanitarian response for Syrian refugees in Iraq, in close coordination with humanitarian actors and government authorities, to protect and assist refugees and asylum-seekers</p>	<p>Supported activities for refugees, IDPs, and persons at risk of statelessness related to registration and civil documentation; protection monitoring and advocacy; legal aid; health; shelter and camp management; psychosocial support; child protection; prevention, risk mitigation, and response to gender-based violence and sexual exploitation and abuse.</p>
<p>IOM FY 2021 amount: \$35,190,000</p> <p>Works to improve the conditions for dignified and voluntary returns to areas of origin, local integration, and settlement in new locations,</p>	<p>Provided civil documentation and legal assistance, social cohesion support, financial assistance, health consultations, and protection monitoring and advocacy.</p> <p>Collected data on displacement, conditions in areas of return, and main barriers to return for IDPs and returnees.</p>
<p>Other International Organizations FY 2021 amount: \$40,900,000</p> <p>Support refugees, IDPs, returnees, and other vulnerable communities in Iraq with a range of humanitarian assistance and services</p>	<p>Supported overall humanitarian assistance and services for refugees, IDPs, and members of other vulnerable communities.</p>
<p>NGOs–Education FY 2021 amount: \$11,822,221</p> <p>Supports education services for displaced school-aged children</p>	<p>Supported education services for displaced school-aged children, which is a key need for refugee, IDP, and other returnee families.</p>
<p>NGOs–Livelihoods and Economic Empowerment FY 2021 amount: \$15,308,671</p> <p>Supports the restoration of income-generating and livelihoods opportunities</p>	<p>Activities included building the capacity of the local government and institutions to provide services in the agricultural sector, trainings to develop key business knowledge and skills, cash grants for enterprise start-ups, and legal assistance services with livelihoods interventions to support beneficiaries' access to income.</p>
<p>NGOs–Protection FY 2021 amount: \$15,732,138</p> <p>Supports protection activities to reduce risk for refugees and IDPs</p>	<p>Supported gender-based violence prevention and response activities, legal assistance and awareness raising to remove legal barriers to durable solutions for displacement-affected individuals, case management, mental health and psychosocial support services, child protection and child safeguarding training, and support for community centers.</p>

Source: DoS, response to DoS OIG request for information, 3/18/2022.

Table 9.

USAID-funded Humanitarian Assistance Activities During the Quarter

Program	Activity Highlights During the Quarter
<p>Implementing Partners –Water, Sanitation, and Hygiene Seeks to provide safe drinking water, and support for water, sanitation, and hygiene infrastructure in and outside of IDP camps, and promote sanitary living conditions.</p>	<p>Provided water trucking and desludging services to 4,295 individuals and 35,188 individuals respectively.</p> <p>Distributed 243 garbage bins to areas in camps and collective centers to facilitate garbage collection.</p> <p>Conducted hygiene promotion activities, reaching 21,631 individuals in January 2022.</p> <p>Conducted solid waste management services in camps and collective centers benefitting 47,270 individuals.</p> <p>Conducted activities including water quality monitoring, garbage truck collections, and sanitation maintenance in IDP camps.</p>
<p>UN World Food Program- Food Security Seeks to provide food assistance and supports disaster risk reduction, policy, and practices.</p>	<p>World Food Programme continued providing cash-based food assistance to vulnerable populations.</p> <p>Provided cash and food assistance to approximately 258,000 people, including approximately 184,000 IDPs, 68,000 refugees, and 5,800 people from vulnerable communities in February 2022 with the support of USAID BHA and other donor funding.</p>

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

Sources: USAID and DoS, “Iraq–Complex Emergency Fact Sheet #1, 12/22/2021; USAID BHA, response to USAID OIG request for information, 3/18/2022; USAID and DoS, “Iraq–Complex Emergency Humanitarian Update #320,” 4/19/2022.

According to NGO reporting, Prime Minister al-Kadhimi instructed his ministers to build and maintain a strategic reserve of key food staples after convening emergency cabinet meetings in early March. The Iraqi government then raised the price it pays local farmers for wheat and authorized the Ministry of Trade to spend \$100 million to import up to three million tons of wheat.³⁷⁸ Media also reported that the Iraqi government planned to provide a monthly allowance to pensioners and low-income civil servants. In addition, the Iraqi government suspended customs duties on food products, basic consumer goods, and construction materials for a period of two months. To prevent merchants from exploiting shortages to raise prices, NGO and media sources reported that the Iraqi government announced it would hold merchants accountable for price manipulations and that the Interior Ministry had already arrested 31 individuals accused of price gouging.³⁷⁹

HUMANITARIAN ACCESS

New Access Requirements Request Limits on Expatriate Staff

The Iraqi Department of Non-Governmental Organizations requested that international NGOs reduce the number of expatriate staff included in routine access approval letters for site visits and monitoring trips.³⁸⁰ USAID reported that it was tracking the situation, but also said that the requirement to reduce expatriate personnel did not appear to present significant challenges to programming or access during the quarter.³⁸¹

IRAQ: U.S. ASSISTANCE SNAPSHOT

January 1, 2022–March 31, 2022

The Iraqi government has identified agriculture, water, and health as some of the sectors most vulnerable to climate change. Environmental degradation, including reduced water flow and increased salinity in river and tributaries, impacts agriculture and undermines the livelihoods of families in rural areas causing climate-induced displacement.

DHI QAR PROVINCE

Water scarcity and other climatic factors have displaced 3,358 families across 10 provinces in Iraq, according to IOM. The majority of families were from Dhi Qar province (1,542) which hosts the largest number of families experiencing climate-induced displacement.

MAYSAN PROVINCE

An NGO reported protests in the town of al-Salam on the border between Dhi Qar and Maysan provinces. Protests occurred after increased cases of water-borne illnesses due to water scarcity and high pollution from dumping in local rivers.



DIYALA, QADISIYA, AND WASIT PROVINCES

Between December 2021 and March 2022, IOM reported an additional 332 families displaced across the central and southern provinces in Iraq, including 115 families in Diyala province due to drought, 101 families in Qadisiya province due to low water levels and increased salinity in the Euphrates and al-Rahma rivers, and 25 families in Wasit province due to tribal disagreements related to water access.

2.5 million

People in Need of Humanitarian Assistance

UN OCHA–March 2022

961,000

Number of People in Acute Need

UN OCHA–March 2022

1.19 million

Number of IDPs

IOM–December 2021

256,861

Number of Syrian Refugees Sheltering in Iraq

UNHCR–February 2022

4.95 million

Number of IDP Returns Since 2014

IOM–December 2021

COVID-19 VACCINE ROLLOUT

At the end of the quarter, more than **17.7 million** vaccine doses were administered in Iraq, approximately **7.2 million** people were fully vaccinated.

Allocated (COVAX)

10,536,900

Doses Delivered

- COVAX/Global–AstraZeneca: **835,200**
- COVAX/Italy–AstraZeneca: **201,600**
- COVAX/USA–Pfizer/BioNTech: **503,100**
- COVAX/Global–Pfizer/BioNTech: **1,660,230**
- COVAX/Global–Other: **5,349,620**
- China–Sinopharm: **799,000**
- Pfizer/BioNTech (Procured): **100,000**
- Sinopharm (Procured): **1,000,000**
- Other (Procured) & Unknown: **8,266,661**

Sources: WHO and the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, “Health and Climate Change Country Profile 2021: Iraq,” 3/24/2022; IOM, “DTM Emergency Tracking: Climate-induced Displacement—Central and Southern Iraq (1 March–15 March 2022),” 3/23/2022; Enabling Peace in Iraq Center, “Iraq Security and Humanitarian Monitor: March 24–31, 2022,” 3/31/2022; UN OCHA, “Iraq Humanitarian Response Plan 2022,” 3/27/2022; UNHCR, “Iraq: Syrian Refugee Statistics February 2022,” 3/9/2022; IOM, “Iraq Master List Report 124, October–December 2021,” 2/9/2022; WHO, Coronavirus (COVID-19) Dashboard: Iraq, as of 4/7/2022; UNICEF, “COVID-19 Vaccine Market Dashboard,” 4/1/2022; UN OCHA, “COVID-19 Vaccine Doses in HRP Countries,” 3/29/2022.

Only 17 percent of Iraqis were reportedly vaccinated at the end of the quarter even though there is sufficient vaccine supply to provide third doses to adults, according to media reports.

COVID-19

Vaccine Acceptance Remains Low

The UN Children’s Fund (UNICEF) and the Iraqi Ministry of Health launched a vaccination campaign with more than 1,300 mobile outreach teams across Iraq to expand coverage of the coronavirus disease–2019 (COVID-19) vaccine and routine immunizations.³⁸² The campaign prioritized COVID-19 vaccinations for people over 60 years old, people with health risks, health workers, teachers, and security personnel; the campaign also identified infants and young children who missed routine childhood vaccines such as polio and measles.³⁸³

However, vaccination acceptance remains low. Only 17 percent of Iraqis were reportedly vaccinated at the end of the quarter even though there is sufficient vaccine supply to provide third doses to adults, according to media reports.³⁸⁴ This level of vaccination is far below the World Health Organization’s (WHO) goal of 70 percent of every country fully vaccinated by the end of June.³⁸⁵ During the quarter, approximately 3.6 million vaccine doses were administered in Iraq, a decrease from the more than 6.5 million doses administered in the previous quarter.³⁸⁶ Following a decline in cases in the previous quarter, confirmed cases of COVID-19 in Iraq increased during the quarter due to many cases attributed to the Omicron variant, which was first detected in Iraq in early January.³⁸⁷

A physician working for the Ministry of Health said in a media report that Iraqis are skeptical of the vaccination campaign because of lack of trust related to any government program. There is also widespread belief in the falsehood that the COVID-19 vaccines cause infertility.³⁸⁸ Some Iraqis are also skeptical of the COVID-19 vaccines based upon their provenance—some do not trust the Pfizer vaccine because it is from the United States, while others distrust the Sinopharm vaccine because it is from China.³⁸⁹

In November, USAID announced an additional \$3 million in COVID-19 assistance to Iraq would be implemented by UNICEF and WHO.³⁹⁰ The UNICEF award, co-designed with the USAID Mission in Iraq, seeks to implement emergency activities that also provide medium- to long-term solutions, thereby strengthening government capacity and systems for the benefit of the current COVID-19 pandemic and future events.³⁹¹ Direct support to the COVID-19 vaccination campaign by UNICEF during the quarter included training 150 healthcare workers, procurement of 300 laptops for the Ministry of Health, and launching a rumor-tracking dashboard.³⁹² Examples of activities designed to benefit both the vaccination campaign and overall health system included procurement of 88 remote temperature monitoring devices and 40 vaccine cold storage rooms.³⁹³ WHO planned programming funded by USAID includes the monitoring of vaccine safety and adverse events following immunization, procurement of essential equipment including oxygen and lab supplies, and training and monitoring of infection prevention and control.³⁹⁴

During the quarter, WHO used USAID funding to conduct online workshops and a focus group to address perceptions about vaccine administration and adverse effects after immunization.³⁹⁵ WHO delivered more than 20 tons of medical supplies to the Ministry of Health in the Iraqi Kurdistan Region, including over \$40,000 in medical furniture, medical devices, and laboratory equipment and supplies.³⁹⁶

Iraq Ministry of Health and WHO Publish Strategic Plan to Combat Gender-Based Violence

During the quarter the Ministry of Health in Iraq and WHO launched its first gender-based violence (GBV) strategic plan to coordinate the health system’s response to GBV and reduce its short and long-term negative health consequences.³⁹⁷ WHO reported that GBV health services will be integrated into primary health facilities and referral hospitals.³⁹⁸ The WHO representative in Iraq also indicated that WHO will need to also address root causes of GBV including gender and social inequalities that were exacerbated during the COVID-19 pandemic. More than 75 percent of the estimated 1.32 million people at risk for GBV in Iraq are women and adolescent girls.³⁹⁹ According to WHO, 77 percent of incidents are linked to domestic violence.⁴⁰⁰

Iraq’s GBV challenges are exemplified by recently reported developments in the Iraqi Kurdistan Region. Nine femicides—“the intentional murder of women because they are women,” according to WHO—occurred in the Iraqi Kurdistan Region during the quarter, according to a media report.⁴⁰¹ A U.S. Government-funded NGO noted that many of the deaths are described as “honor killings,” while noting that COVID-19 exacerbated the risk to women for GBV.⁴⁰² The Iraqi Kurdistan Region has a law that criminalizes harmful traditional practices as a form of domestic violence on the basis of gender, but federal Iraq law does not specifically reference violence on the basis of gender.⁴⁰³ Despite the laws in place, the NGO reported that overlapping systems of legal codes, Islamic law, and local tribal customs and practices do not always protect victims of GBV.⁴⁰⁴

USAID supports five implementers that provide humanitarian GBV programming in IDP camps and informal settlements.⁴⁰⁵ USAID reported that one implementer trained their staff on the new strategy.⁴⁰⁶ During the quarter, one USAID implementer provided GBV services to 340 female beneficiaries across the country. Programming included strengthening protection case management, identifying safe spaces for women and girls, improving local capacity for protection, and awareness raising and training.⁴⁰⁷ Through WHO, USAID also supports capacity building for integrated psychosocial support to GBV survivors.⁴⁰⁸

During the quarter the Ministry of Health in Iraq and WHO launched its first gender-based violence (GBV) strategic plan to coordinate the health system’s response to GBV and reduce its short and long-term negative health consequences.







U.S. Soldiers operate a M2A3 Bradley Fighting Vehicles during a live-fire exercise in Syria. (U.S. Army photo)

SYRIA

64 Security

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SYRIA

The Office of the Under Secretary of Defense for Policy International Security Affairs (OUSD(P)) said that the U.S. Government is focused on “practical and achievable goals” in Syria.⁴⁰⁹ These goals include sustaining the Global Coalition to Defeat ISIS campaign; supporting the expansion of humanitarian access in Syria; pressing for justice and accountability; and supporting a political process led by the Syrian people, as outlined in UN Security Council Resolution (UNSCR) 2254.⁴¹⁰

SECURITY

U.S. forces, as part of the Global Coalition to Defeat ISIS, advise, assist, and enable two partner forces in Syria. The Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) are the main counter-ISIS partner in the Eastern Syria Security Area—which includes parts of Hasakah and Dayr az Zawr governorates east of the Euphrates River. The SDF were instrumental in defeating the ISIS territorial “caliphate” in 2019. The Mughawir al-Thawra (MaT) forces operate further south, near the convergence of the Syrian, Iraqi, and Jordanian borders. The MaT have been partnered with U.S. forces in fighting ISIS as well as securing the deconfliction zone around the At Tanf Garrison, where an estimated 200 U.S. forces are based.⁴¹¹ (See Page 66.)

Additional details about SDF and MaT capabilities during the quarter are available in the classified appendix to this report.

SYRIAN DEMOCRATIC FORCES

SDF Maintains Pressure on ISIS, Continues to Rely on Coalition

During the quarter, the SDF conducted 26 counter-ISIS operations, all with support from Coalition Forces. (See Figure 7.) The operations were single day and do not include operations in the immediate aftermath of the ISIS attack on the Ghwayran Detention Facility in January.⁴¹² Combined Joint Task Force–Operation Inherent Resolve (CJTF-



SELECTED KEY EVENTS, JANUARY 1, 2022–MARCH 31, 2022

JANUARY 3

ISIS attacks a Syrian regime convoy travelling between Homs and Dayr az Zawr governorates, killing 5 soldiers and wounding 20.

JANUARY 11

A Kurdish Red Crescent worker is killed at a health facility inside the al-Hol camp for displaced persons.

FEBRUARY 2

U.S. forces raid compound of ISIS Leader Abu Ibrahim al-Hashimi al-Qurayshi. Abu Ibrahim kills himself by detonating a bomb at the house.

JAN

JANUARY 5

Eight rounds of indirect fire target Coalition forces in the SDF’s Green Village base in Dayr az Zawr governorate. No injuries were reported.

JANUARY 20

ISIS conducts a complex jail-break attack at SDF-run Ghwayran Detention Facility, sparking 10-day battle and uprising; close to 500 people are killed.

FEB

U.S. Soldiers make M2A3 Bradley Fighting Vehicles operationally ready in northeastern Syria. (U.S. Army photo)



FEBRUARY 22

Turkey announces new operation targeting SDF and YPG forces in northern Syria.

MARCH 10

ISIS announces new leader, Abu Hasan al-Hashimi al-Qurayshi, reported to be the brother of the slain former ISIS caliph Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi.

MAR

FEBRUARY 7

ISIS-linked residents in the al-Hol camp attack guards, prompting gunfire that kills a child and injures six family members.

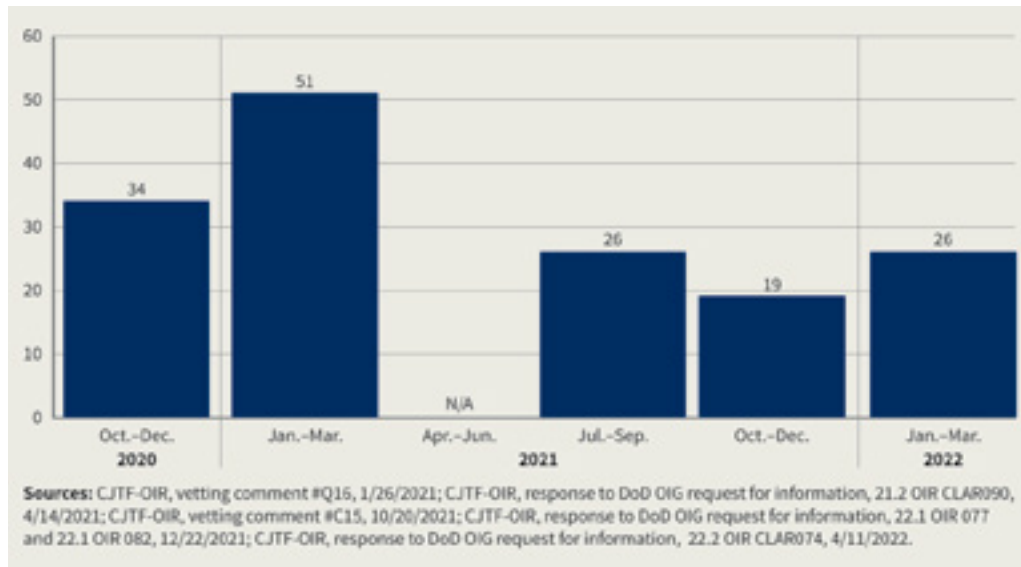
MARCH 6

ISIS clams attack on bus carrying Syrian regime forces, killing as many as 15 soldiers in the central desert near Palmyra, Syria.

MARCH 28

ISIS fighters clash with security forces in al-Hol using assault rifles and RPGs, killing three. The SDF arrest 46 people in security sweep.

Figure 7.

SDF Operations by Quarter, October 2020–March 2022

OIR) reported that much of the SDF’s focus during the quarter was on responding to the Ghuwayran facility attack and its aftermath. The SDF’s intelligence collection efforts slowed significantly as a result.⁴¹³

During the quarter, the SDF killed 457 enemy fighters and detained 158 others, including during the Ghuwayran battle, CJTF-OIR reported.⁴¹⁴

The DoS credited the “diligent and capable efforts” of the SDF in responding to the Ghuwayran facility attack.⁴¹⁵ OUSD(P) said that the SDF demonstrated its ability to maintain pressure on ISIS across northeastern Syria, including Dayr az Zawr, even while surging personnel and capabilities to defend against the attack.⁴¹⁶ The DoS said that the attack showed the need for funding new initiatives to enhance SDF detention facility security and ultimately reduce the population inside the facilities.⁴¹⁷

CJTF-OIR provided intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance (ISR) to the SDF as the SDF responded to the attack.⁴¹⁸ CJTF-OIR said that the SDF’s continued reliance on Coalition ISR support is “the biggest challenge” the SDF faced during the quarter.⁴¹⁹

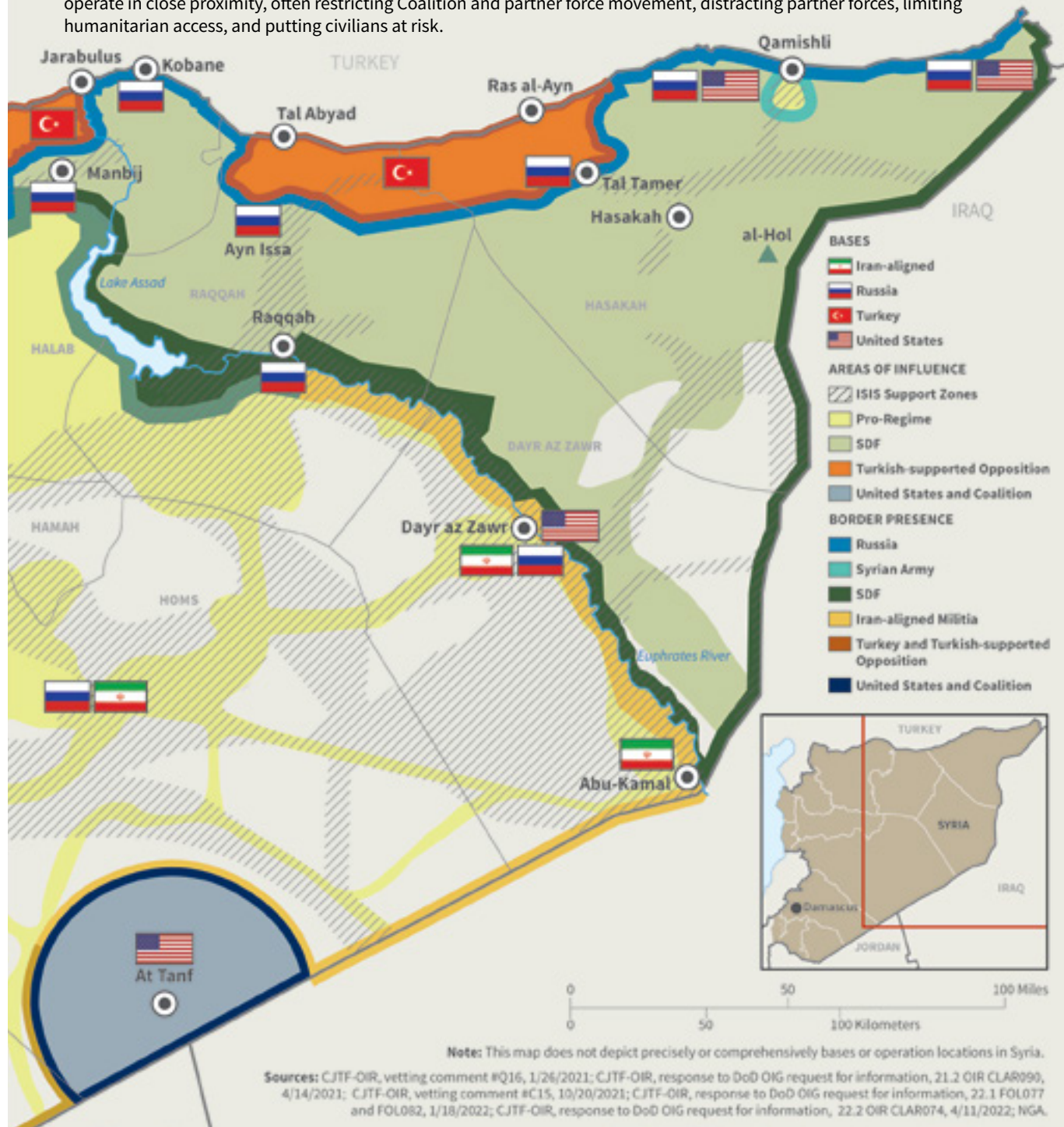
The Coalition also deployed its Bradley Fighting Vehicles to support the SDF response to the Ghuwayran facility attack. CJTF-OIR said the vehicles provided “crucial security and freedom of maneuver” for the SDF, allowing them to move on and around the detention facility and ultimately secure it.⁴²⁰ Following the attack, CJTF-OIR said it deployed additional Bradley Fighting Vehicles to Syria in response to ongoing threat streams in the region, in order to provide additional combat power and flexibility for the Coalition.⁴²¹ CJTF-OIR said in a press release that the Bradleys have since been sent to support the SDF in areas further south, along the Middle Euphrates River Valley.⁴²²

OUSD(P) said that the SDF demonstrated its ability to maintain pressure on ISIS across northeastern Syria, including while surging personnel and capabilities to defend against the attack.

THE OPERATING ENVIRONMENT IN SYRIA

Coalition forces in Syria operate in a complex political and military environment. Violence associated with the Syrian civil war, begun in 2011, has destabilized the country and has led to the deaths of half a million people. Today, the regime of President Bashar al-Assad, with military support from Russia and Iran, controls most of the country.

The Coalition supports partner forces in areas not under regime control, including the SDF in the northeast and the MaT near the At Tanf Garrison. Russian and pro-regime forces also operate in parts of those areas. In addition, Turkey conducts cross-border operations that target what it says are Kurdish extremists, but also include SDF forces. All of these rival forces operate in close proximity, often restricting Coalition and partner force movement, distracting partner forces, limiting humanitarian access, and putting civilians at risk.



Ghuwayran Attack Accelerates Detention Facility Improvements

In the wake of the Ghuwayran facility attack, the SDF conducted an internal investigation to determine “the source of the attack,” and subsequently relieved the entire guard force at the Ghuwayran facility.⁴²³ CJTF-OIR said it did not receive the specific findings of the investigation.⁴²⁴ The facility and some other SDF detention facilities are guarded primarily by forces in the SDF Provincial Interior Security Forces (PrISF).⁴²⁵ CJTF-OIR reported that the U.S. Special Operations Task Force is currently working to rebuild the guard force at the Ghuwayran facility. In the meantime, the SDF has replaced the PrISF force at Ghuwayran with commandos to serve as guards at the detention facility.⁴²⁶

Since the territorial defeat of ISIS in 2019, the SDF has maintained at least 14 detention facilities holding more than 10,000 ISIS detainees—mostly in overcrowded, ad-hoc structures that were not built to hold detainees.⁴²⁷ About 2,000 of the detainees are from countries outside of Iraq and Syria.⁴²⁸

According to the SDF and research organizations, as many as 5,000 ISIS detainees were held at the Ghuwayran facility at the time of the attack.⁴²⁹ CJTF-OIR said that the detainees were housed in a converted school building within the Ghuwayran Detention Facility that, like other SDF detention facilities, was “overcrowded and not up to par to international standards.”⁴³⁰ Each detainee had approximately 0.6 square meters of living space, with up to 100 to 150 people per cell.⁴³¹ The main entry point, which had been upgraded prior to the attack, was substantially damaged and the perimeter wall was breached in several places.⁴³² The four cell blocks were all structurally damaged; three were demolished.⁴³³

During the fighting ISIS detainees attempted to destroy a new, more secure detention structure that was being built to replace the existing facility.⁴³⁴ CJTF-OIR said ISIS failed to destroy the structure, which was nearly complete at the time of the attack.⁴³⁵ Following the battle, all detainees were relocated to the new facility.⁴³⁶ CJTF-OIR said the new annex is hardened, reduced the overcrowding, and is now “up to standard.”⁴³⁷ Brigadier General Isaac Peltier, the Commander of Special Operations Joint Task Force–Levant (SOJTF-L) said in a press release that the attack “ultimately sped up the clock to ensuring that the detainees are in a hardened facility from which they will never escape.”⁴³⁸

General Kenneth F. McKenzie, Jr., the former commander of the U.S. Central Command (USCENTCOM), stated during a press conference in March that repatriation of detainees is the only long-term solution.⁴³⁹ There is currently no mechanism to try and sentence ISIS detainees in SDF custody. The SDF said the attack demonstrated the need for greater assistance from the international Coalition, and called for the creation of an international tribunal to prosecute ISIS fighters.⁴⁴⁰

General McKenzie said that the SDF remained able to respond to external threats against the detention facilities. But he warned of a continued “threat from internal riots and coordinated action with ISIS cells at large.”⁴⁴¹

In the wake of the Ghuwayran facility attack, the SDF conducted an internal investigation to determine “the source of the attack,” and subsequently relieved the entire guard force at the Ghuwayran facility.

During the quarter, CJTF-OIR used more than \$3.6 million in Counter-ISIS Train and Equip Fund funding to refurbish buildings within the Ghuwayran complex, purchase closed-circuit television security system, and support other efforts to maintain the “secure and humane” detention of ISIS fighters.

CJTF-OIR said that SOJTF-L is currently assessing the security of SDF detention centers across the ESSA.⁴⁴² In addition, it said the DoD is working to develop training and identify the support required to ensure that the SDF is able to secure detention facilities, despite losses in the Ghuwayran facility attack.⁴⁴³ OUSD(P) noted that Congress enacted critical legislation in the FY2022 National Defense Authorization Act that provided a waiver to limits on the authorizations being used to assist the SDF with detention facility construction projects. The new legislation enables the DoD, with interagency support, to proceed with planning efforts to improve the security at SDF detention facilities holding ISIS detainees.⁴⁴⁴

During the quarter, CJTF-OIR used more than \$3.6 million in Counter-ISIS Train and Equip Fund (CTEF) funding to refurbish buildings within the Ghuwayran complex, purchase closed-circuit television security system, and support other efforts to maintain the “secure and humane” detention of ISIS fighters.⁴⁴⁵

Juvenile Detainees Killed During Ghuwayran Facility Attack

During the Ghuwayran facility attack, juvenile detainees held at the facility were taken hostage, went without food or water, or were killed during the battle, according to the SDF and reports from humanitarian and media organizations.⁴⁴⁶ The SDF said that ISIS attackers had used children as “human shields.”⁴⁴⁷ The crisis prompted an outcry from international organizations, which called for children to be evacuated from the detention facility.⁴⁴⁸

CJTF-OIR said that ISIS did not specifically target the juvenile wing during the attack and that the structure remains largely intact.⁴⁴⁹ Like the rest of the facility, conditions in the wing prior to the attack were run down and overcrowded.⁴⁵⁰ The children were undernourished and there were serious health issues, including HIV and tuberculosis, CJTF-OIR and Human Rights Watch reported.⁴⁵¹ Children were reportedly only going outside once every two weeks, displayed signs of distress (nightmares, crying), had no regular family contact, and lacked documentation.⁴⁵²

The UN Office for the High Commissioner of Human Rights said in early April that at least 100 boys remained unaccounted for since the January attack and noted that the SDF has been given “an almost impossible humanitarian, human rights, and security responsibility.”⁴⁵³

CJTF-OIR said that the juveniles are held in SDF detention with no judicial processes.⁴⁵⁴ The SDF detained them due to their believed affiliation with ISIS, with many assessed to have received military and ideological training with the group, according to both the SDF and CJTF-OIR.⁴⁵⁵ While the SDF said it treats the children primarily as victims, it has called on the international community to rehabilitate them before returning them to their communities.⁴⁵⁶

UNICEF’s Syrian representative, Bo Viktor Nylund, visited the detention facility on February 5 and said that children should never be in detention due to association with armed groups and should always be treated as victims of conflict.⁴⁵⁷

CJTF-OIR said it could not confirm how many children were in detention after the attack.⁴⁵⁸ CJTF-OIR said that while approximately 700 boys aged 10 to 17 were brought to the Ghwayran facility following the fall of Baghuz in 2019, the number of juvenile detainees appears to have decreased since then.⁴⁵⁹ These youths—many of whom are not Syrian and await repatriation to their countries of origin—are held separately from adults, and international and humanitarian organizations have access to them, the DoS reported.⁴⁶⁰ CJTF-OIR said that many juveniles who arrived in 2019 are now older than 18 years old and the number of juveniles in the facility has declined.⁴⁶¹

The DoS said that the SDF is not able to care for the more than 100 juvenile detainees in age-appropriate facilities where they can begin the reintegration process. The SDF has requested support from the international community to build additional juvenile housing centers.⁴⁶²

MUGHAWIR AL-THAWRA

CJTF-OIR Conducts Joint Patrols, Exercises to Train MaT

CJTF-OIR said that there were no significant changes to its partnership with the MaT forces during the quarter.⁴⁶³ CJTF-OIR forces continued to advise, assist, and enable the MaT within the deconfliction zone surrounding the At Tanf Garrison to “improve lethality through partnered training.”⁴⁶⁴

CJTF-OIR said the Coalition’s objective with MaT forces is “increasing overall lethality to enable the enduring defeat of ISIS.” CJTF-OIR said that it continues to build situational awareness of the area of operations and gain information on malign actors.⁴⁶⁵

CJTF-OIR reported that U.S. forces conducted approximately 37 joint patrols and a combined arms exercise with the MaT during the quarter, including 30 patrols in January and February that focused on force protection and presence controls and reconnaissance.⁴⁶⁶ In March, CJTF-OIR conducted 7 patrols with the MaT—many lasting over multiple days, resulting in a total of 17 days and 11 nights of patrolling, and focused on wide area security and capacity building exercises.⁴⁶⁷

CJTF-OIR said that it continued to advise MaT forces during partnered training exercises. Training included rehearsals of actions on contact, and movement and maneuver drills.⁴⁶⁸ The MaT did not conduct any counter-ISIS operations during the quarter.⁴⁶⁹

CJTF-OIR said that it has increased the means of communication with the MaT to provide CJTF-OIR situational awareness and early warning.⁴⁷⁰ The MaT did not engage in any combat during the quarter.⁴⁷¹

CJTF-OIR forces continued to advise, assist, and enable the MaT within the deconfliction zone surrounding the At Tanf Garrison to “improve lethality through partnered training.”

Role of Third Parties

Forces associated with the Syrian regime, Iran, Russia, and Turkey continued to operate in Syria during the quarter.⁴⁷² While these forces also conducted limited operations against ISIS, OUSD(P) said that these actors seek to erode the SDF's base of support by attacking their forces and sowing discontent in local communities in northeastern Syria.⁴⁷³ This pressure distracts the SDF from its fight against ISIS.⁴⁷⁴ In addition, media reported that civilian distrust of the long-term viability of the SDF if U.S. forces pull out of Syria or the Syrian regime regains control, hampers SDF intelligence in some communities in northeastern Syria.⁴⁷⁵

SYRIAN REGIME BLOCKS U.S. CONVOYS

The Defense Intelligence Agency (DIA) reported that pro-regime forces continued to conduct occasional counter-ISIS operations in the Syrian desert during the quarter with no substantive change from the previous quarter.⁴⁷⁶ The Syrian Observatory for Human Rights reported at least six instances in which regime forces or a regime checkpoint stopped a Coalition convoy from passing. No fighting between Coalition and pro-regime forces was reported.⁴⁷⁷

IRAN-ALIGNED MILITIAS ATTACK COALITION FORCES

CJTF-OIR said that Iran and Iran-aligned militias continued to pose a threat to Coalition forces in Syria during the quarter. On January 5, Iran-aligned militias launched eight rounds of direct fire against Coalition forces positioned at the SDF's Green Village base in Dayr az Zawr governorate, resulting in minor damage to the base but no casualties.⁴⁷⁸

Coalition forces had observed the potential threat from several rocket launch sites hours before the attack and conducted pre-emptive strikes in self-defense.⁴⁷⁹ After militia fire still struck the base, Coalition forces responded with additional counter-battery artillery fire against the point of origin near Mayadin, in regime-controlled territory.⁴⁸⁰

RUSSIA CONTINUES TO SUPPORT REGIME OPERATIONS, CONDUCT JOINT PATROLS WITH TURKEY

The DIA said that Russia maintained a strong military presence in the north and east, where it bolstered its forces in 2019 following the Turkish incursion and subsequent reduction of U.S. forces in Syria.⁴⁸¹ Russia maintains multiple military police posts along the M4 highway that traverses northern Syria, including several near Ayn Issa, while Qamishli airport continued to serve as its primary logistics hub in northeastern Syria.⁴⁸²

CJTF-OIR said that the Russian military continued to support pro-regime forces in northeastern Syria and create an environment that “pressures the Coalition’s presence in Syria.”⁴⁸³ For example, the Russian military dedicated considerable energy to strategic messaging and information operations aimed at discrediting the Coalition and building its own image as a credible partner in the region.⁴⁸⁴

The DIA said that Russia conducted airstrikes and coordinated pro-regime ground operations against ISIS targets in the central Syrian desert, but did not stage any large-scale clearing operations this quarter.⁴⁸⁵ The DIA noted that ISIS operations declined in central Syria because the group was focused on supporting the attack at the Ghwayran Detention Facility in the northeast.⁴⁸⁶

(continued on next page)

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

Russia continued to violate protocols put in place to deconflict Russian and Coalition force movements in Syria. CJTF-OIR reported that although Russian air violations increased during the quarter, the number of ground violations dropped considerably, bringing down the overall number of violations compared to the previous quarter.⁴⁸⁷ CJTF-OIR said the Russian military air violations posed “no inherent threat” to Coalition forces.⁴⁸⁸

Russian forces continued to conduct joint patrols with Turkish forces in northeastern Syria during the quarter, despite having competing goals in other areas of Syria and Ukraine.⁴⁸⁹

TURKEY TARGETS PEOPLE’S PROTECTION UNIT (YPG) PERSONNEL

Like other rival forces in Syria, Turkey also continued its operations against ISIS. The U.S. European Command, (USEUCOM) reported that Turkish security forces routinely conducted raids and detained ISIS members in Turkey to “deter cross-border facilitation, constrain financial and logistic support, and disrupt potential threats.” USEUCOM said that Turkey’s counter-ISIS activities and sustained border presence have reduced ISIS’s ability to conduct and support attacks within and from Turkey.⁴⁹⁰

At the same time, tensions also continued this quarter between Turkish-supported forces and the SDF in northeastern Syria.⁴⁹¹ The DIA said that there were no substantive changes to the scope, scale, or tempo of Turkish operations in northeastern Syria.⁴⁹²

Turkey does not differentiate between the SDF and Kurdish members of the SDF from People’s Protection Units (YPG), which Turkey views as a terrorist organization that routinely attacks Turkish-supported forces.⁴⁹³ The DIA, citing media reporting, said that Turkish forces continued to conduct attacks during the quarter using explosive-laden vehicles and other explosive devices against YPG personnel, at times causing civilian casualties.⁴⁹⁴

According to the DIA, the SDF claimed that Turkey escalated its campaign in northeastern Syria during the quarter by attacking the region 225 times in 15 days, using howitzers in Syria for the first time.⁴⁹⁵ In February, Turkey’s Defense Minister announced the launch of an air operation, Winter Eagle, that he said included air strikes targeting the positions of the SDF and YPG.⁴⁹⁶

The DoS described reports that Turkish-supported forces committed human rights abuses in northeastern Syria, including abuses relating to kidnapping, torture, rape, and deprivation of property of minority populations residing in these areas, particularly Kurds.⁴⁹⁷ These abuses “complicate the OIR mission by distracting the focus” of the SDF from its defeat ISIS mission, the DoS reported.⁴⁹⁸ The abuses also position ISIS to retain and recruit members while the SDF is focused on protecting Kurdish populations, the DoS said.⁴⁹⁹

OUSD(P) said that despite Turkish rhetoric and ongoing SDF concerns, there are no indications that Turkey is preparing large-scale offensive operations in northeastern Syria.⁵⁰⁰

STABILIZATION

The DoS said that stabilization assistance in Syria plays a “critical role” in the current stage of the OIR mission by addressing the economic and social divides previously exploited by ISIS, and also closing gaps in local authority capacity and supporting civil society to advocate for citizen needs.⁵⁰¹ The DoS funds programs that support education, community security, independent media, civil society, social cohesion, transitional justice, accountability, restoration of essential services, and a political resolution to the Syrian conflict in line with UNSCR 2254.⁵⁰² USAID stabilization assistance focuses on restoring essential services and infrastructure, economic recovery, private sector development, and governance.⁵⁰³ (See Tables 10 and 11.)

U.S. Government stabilization programs are managed through the Syria Transition Assistance Response Team (START) platform and the Southern Syria Assistance Platform in Jordan.⁵⁰⁴ Though DoS and USAID START programs are funded and managed separately, personnel from both agencies work together to share information daily and deconflict overlaps in programming.⁵⁰⁵

Syria Remains a Challenging Environment for Stabilization Efforts

The DoS reported that price fluctuations, drought, and the temporary closure of the Faysh Khabur-Semalka border crossing increased the need for stabilization and humanitarian assistance in northeastern Syria.⁵⁰⁶ The DoS said its civil society and education projects continued to support emerging small businesses and entrepreneurs and technical and vocational training. This stabilization assistance is “vital to helping to accelerate inclusive economic recovery” in areas liberated from ISIS, the DoS reported.⁵⁰⁷

The U.S. Government’s stabilization partners and implementers in Syria continued to face many challenges that impacted the efficient delivery of stabilization programming, including conflict, security barriers, and a weak economy.⁵⁰⁸ The January 20 ISIS attack on the Ghwayran Detention Facility resulted in the temporary suspension of U.S. Government stabilization activities in the surrounding areas and the death of a firefighter employed by the Hasakah Civic Council (a DoS partner).⁵⁰⁹ ISIS attacks during the quarter continued to target individuals affiliated with the SDF and the Self-Administration of Northeastern Syria (SANES), threatening immediate and longer-term stability in the area, the DoS reported.⁵¹⁰

USAID’s Middle East Bureau reported that in northeastern Syria, the overall challenges and context remained unchanged since the previous quarter.⁵¹¹ The bureau said that its programming continued to support to the U.S. Government’s Defeat ISIS goals, objectives, and strategy. During the quarter, following the Russian invasion of Ukraine, the Syrian regime announced spending cuts due to anticipated reductions in Russian government support, increased prices of oil and food commodities, and increased transportation costs.⁵¹² The bureau reported that the U.S. Government’s heightened focus on economic interventions has resulted in USAID examining additional ways to engage in livelihoods and economic development programming in northeastern Syria.⁵¹³

Table 10.

DoS-funded Stabilization Programs in Syria

Program Goals	Activities During the Quarter
<p>Support to the Syrian Political Process Seeks to strengthen the capabilities of stakeholders to participate in the Constitutional Committee and work with other UN-convened negotiations in support of UNSCR 2254.</p>	<p>Encouraged engagement with Syrian civil society organizations, local governance entities, and Syrian citizens, including the Syrian diaspora.</p> <p>Supported workshops and dialogue sessions to help the Constitutional Committee bridge the gap between local community-based organizations and their local constituents by facilitating initiatives to ensure political inclusivity, knowledge sharing, and outreach.</p>
<p>Essential Services and Local Governance Seeks to build local councils' ability to provide essential services to their communities.</p>	<p>Partnered with local governance entities in Raqqah, Hasakah, and Dayr az Zawr governorates to provide operational support to first responders, rehabilitate essential water infrastructure, and build partner capacity.</p> <p>Facilitated financial management, project management, strategic planning, and computer skills training for civic council personnel in Dayr az Zawr governorate and expanded this programming in Hasakah and Raqqah governorates.</p> <p>Technical experts assessed infrastructure rehabilitation projects in Dayr az Zawr governorate.</p>
<p>Civil Society Seeks to help civil society organizations restore essential services and livelihoods in areas liberated from ISIS.</p>	<p>Continued to increase civic participation in the political process, strengthen nonsectarian voices, provide enhanced accountability for local governance structures, and support Syrian civil society organizations in implementing local reconciliation initiatives to prevent intercommunal conflict and violence. These initiatives help identify and design solutions to barriers to social cohesion.</p> <p>Supported the organizational capacity of civil society, advocacy organizations, and individuals to counter extremism and stabilize their communities through training and advocacy activities.</p>
<p>Community Security Seeks to build the capacity of internal security forces to provide security in a way that supports, and is supported by, the communities they serve.</p>	<p>Provided training for security forces personnel on community policing skills; undertook capacity-building efforts with the local governance entities overseeing the security forces; rehabilitated facilities; held engagements between security forces personnel and local community members; and rehabilitated streetlights in under-served areas to address a primary security concern of local communities.</p>
<p>Education Seeks to build the capacity of local councils, their education committees, and community-based organizations to provide remedial literacy and numeracy, primary education, psychosocial support for children, vocational training, and school rehabilitation.</p>	<p>Provided psychosocial support, remedial literacy and numeracy courses, and self-learning classes to children in formal schools and in informal displaced persons camps.</p> <p>In February, the program expanded a reintegration program in Raqqah and Dayr az Zawr governorates to assist children exposed to ISIS ideology, particularly those returning to their home areas from the al-Hol camp, to reintegrate into education programs.</p>
<p>Independent Media Seeks to promote unbiased, professional, relevant reporting</p>	<p>Partnered with radio, online, and television media platforms in northeastern and northwestern Syria to provide information about COVID-19 and counter disinformation perpetuated by Iran-backed militias, Russia, the Assad regime, violent extremist groups, and other malign actors.</p> <p>In February, partner media outlets produced hundreds of hours of radio and television content, including content produced for audiences at the al-Hol camp, and published thousands of stories online that reached millions of users. User reach is determined based on the number of viewers, shares, and comments.</p> <p>Provided training and mentoring sessions for journalists and producers on writing skills, visual radio production, verification, mobile journalism and social media analytics. More than 180 trainees participated in these sessions.</p>

Source: DoS, response to DoS OIG request for information, 3/18/2022; DoS, vetting comment, 4/19/2022.

Table 11.

USAID-funded Stabilization Programs in Syria

Project	Activities During the Quarter
Enhancing and Supporting Employment and Decent Work for Women and Youth in Raqqah and Dayr az Zawr	Completed awareness raising field visits that provided information on crop diseases and pests and methods to IDP, returnee, and host community farmers. The activity continued its agricultural extension awareness campaign.
Sustainable Energy Alternatives (Solar Kits) for Farmers in Raqqah	Expanded programming to 10 farms in Raqqah governorate. In total, 48 farmers are or soon will be pumping water from their wells using solar energy systems, eliminating the high cost of diesel and allowing the farmers to hire additional workers.
Establishment of Dayr az Zawr Chick Hatchery and Fertilized Eggs Production Farms	Completed physical rehabilitation of the hatchery building in Dayr az Zawr governorate. This activity will revive the local poultry economy by enabling the production of locally hatched and raised chicks that will be sold to poultry farmers in Dayr az Zawr. This lowers the input cost for poultry farmers because they will no longer have to purchase expensive imported chicks.
Skills Training for Conflict-Affected Communities	Supported vocational training for 350 students in Hasakah and Qamishli cities. Courses included men's and women's hairdressing, cosmetics, confectionary processing, IT networking, sewing, and photography. A sub-set of those students moved on to advanced level training courses and received life skills and business start-up training.
Economic Management for Stabilization	Signed partnership agreements with five additional medium-sized companies to provide tailored business development support to companies with high potential for employment growth. A total of 27 companies now participate in the program.
Supporting Livelihoods in Syria	Modified the program, extended the program by 12 months, and increased the estimated award by \$2 million. Program activities included provision of equipment and agricultural machinery, solar powered irrigation centers, high quality wheat seed and fertilizer, livestock feed, fodder seed, foundational wheat seed for seed multiplication purposes, portable seed sorting machines, and the support of existing veterinary extension services.
USAID Syria Livelihoods Program	<p>Malikiya Women's Office Grant: Completed training of 45 women artisans and supported 25 others. Products from the artisans generated a total of over \$1,000 to the artisans during the first months of the program.</p> <p>Provision of Block Presses Program: Launched the implementation of three block press awards in Raqqah, Dayr az Zawr, and Hasakah governorates.</p> <p>Disability Funds Program—Economic Assistance and Support for Empowerment for Persons with Disabilities: Provided career counseling training to 11 people with disabilities in Raqqah. The training is intended to empower the trainees to provide career counseling to persons with disabilities.</p> <p>Women Committees Job Centers Program: Provided job readiness training for committee members in Dayr az Zawr, Hasakah, and Raqqah governorates on resume writing, job interviews, communication skills, and basic Microsoft Office skills.</p> <p>An implementing partner established the Construction Community of Practice, which intends to create partnerships between the public and private sectors, to better raise the concerns of the private sector and address them through better regulations, policies, and services.</p>
Syria Electoral and Political Processes Program	Provided technical assistance to the Syrian Elections Technical Group. Engaged in workshops, trainings, and advocacy campaigns with local communities and civil society organizations related to community issue identification, government accountability, and advocacy campaigns.

Source: USAID ME Bureau, response to USAID OIG request for information, 3/23/2022.

GOVERNANCE AND CIVIL SOCIETY

Seventh Round of UNSCR 2254 Constitutional Committee Meeting Ends in Stalemate

The DoS reported that the seventh round of the Syrian Constitutional Committee, which took place in March, made no progress, largely due to the “obstructionist” behavior of the delegation representing the Syrian regime.⁵¹⁴ The committee, which is tasked with drafting a new Syrian constitution to help set the country on a “fresh trajectory to peace and stability,” struggled through “difficult and halting” deliberations, the DoS said.⁵¹⁵ Committee members discussed four areas of constitutional principles: basics of governance, state identity, state symbols and the regulation and functions of public authorities, the United Nations reported.⁵¹⁶

In a statement released after the March session ended, Special Envoy for Syria Geir Pedersen noted that he had appealed to the members to work with a “sense of seriousness and compromise” so that “substantive issues” could be resolved.⁵¹⁷ According to a DoS cable, the regime failed to work cooperatively and the session ended without a date for the next round.⁵¹⁸

The DoS said that the U.S. Government is particularly disappointed with the Syrian regime delegation’s unwillingness to make progress toward the committee’s goal of drafting a new constitution. The regime “continues to be the biggest obstacle to progress” toward a political resolution to the conflict.⁵¹⁹ Despite the ongoing stalemate, the Constitutional Committee “should not be abandoned ... it is the only active track of the political process under UNSCR 2254,” and ending it could destroy the legitimacy of groups that oppose Syrian President Bashar al-Assad’s government, the DoS reported.⁵²⁰

SDF Demobilized More Than 100 Child Soldiers, But Recruitment Persisted

During the quarter, the SDF implemented measures to end and prevent future recruitment or use of child soldiers, demobilizing more than 100 children and returning them to their families, the DoS said.⁵²¹ Separately, the PKK- affiliated Revolutionary Youth Movement has been accused of luring minors to its military ranks, according to the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights.⁵²² The Revolutionary Youth Movement is not part of the SDF and not party to the SDF’s UN Action Plan signed in 2019, the DoS said.⁵²³ In 2019, a “landmark” agreement was signed by the SDF commander General Mazloum Abdi and the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict.⁵²⁴ According to the United Nations, the Plan of Action “obliges the SDF” to end and prevent the recruitment and use of children under the age of 18; identify and separate boys and girls within its ranks; and put “preventative, protection and disciplinary measures in place” regarding child recruitment and use.⁵²⁵

REPATRIATION AND REINTEGRATION

Repatriation Critical to Prevent ISIS Resurgence

During the quarter, the United States continued to urge countries to repatriate, rehabilitate, reintegrate, and, where appropriate, prosecute their nationals affiliated with ISIS currently living in displaced persons camps or held in detention facilities in northeastern Syria. The DoS said that repatriations are a “critical step toward alleviating the strain” on SDF detention facilities and displaced persons camps and preventing an ISIS resurgence in the region.⁵²⁶ The January 20 Ghwayran facility attack and follow-on attacks against security forces in Dayr az Zawr governorate underscored the urgency of reintegration and repatriation in northeastern Syria.⁵²⁷

The DoS reported that some countries were willing to repatriate their nationals from displaced persons camps and detention facilities, while others remain reluctant to do so. The DoS, citing the SANES external affairs office, reported that during the quarter Sweden repatriated two women and four children on January 26 and two women and two children on March 14, and Russia repatriated nine orphaned children on February 23.⁵²⁸ More information on repatriations during the quarter is available in the classified appendix to this report.

Violence Threatens Civilians and Aid Workers at al-Hol Camp

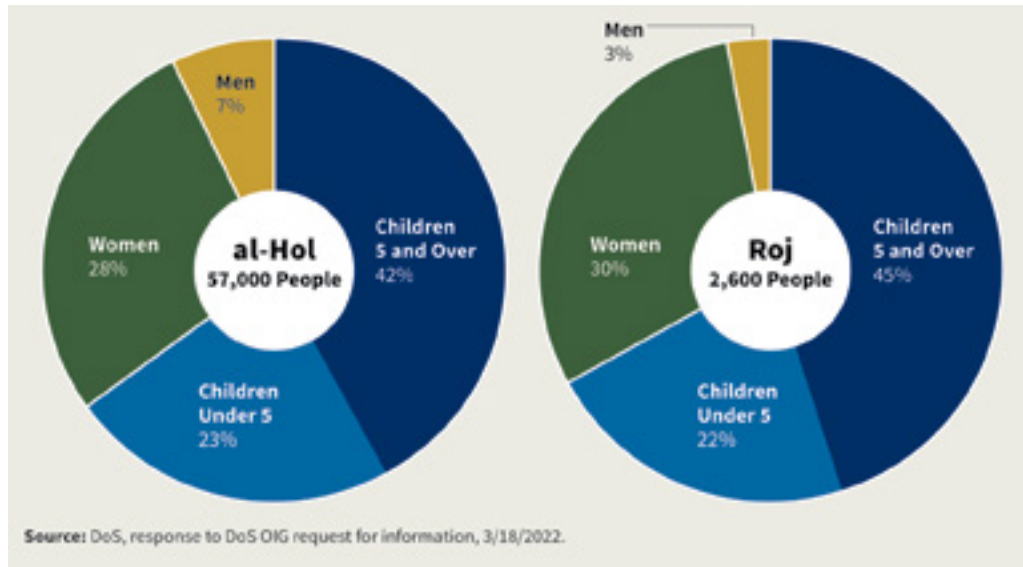
The DoS said that the significant level of violence at al-Hol camp threatens the civilian population and the humanitarian workers who provide vital assistance to them. More than 90 killings occurred in 2021, and extortion threats against NGO workers are commonplace.⁵²⁹

The DoS reported that while Roj camp is substantially calmer than al-Hol, residents are generally unhappy with the lack of clarity on their futures.⁵³⁰ During the quarter, violence at the Roj camp prompted several USAID implementing partners to suspend child protection and food assistance programs.⁵³¹ During a looting and fire incident in the camp, a USAID implementing partner reported significant losses due to theft or damage.⁵³²

The DoS reported that the SANES, the humanitarian community, and the U.S. Government continued to explore ways to improve both external and internal security without compromising humanitarian services at al-Hol camp.⁵³³ The DoS reported that short-term security improvements are “urgently needed” to minimize threats to camp residents, and longer-term solutions are needed to train and equip external and internal security partners.⁵³⁴

The DoS said it “strongly supports” efforts to remove violent actors, active ISIS operatives, and weapons from al-Hol camp, as high levels of violence impede the ability of humanitarian organizations to safely provide assistance at the camp, and “further traumatize an already vulnerable population.”⁵³⁵

Figure 8.

Demographics of Residents of al-Hol and Roj Displaced Persons Camps

The U.S. Government does not maintain any physical presence in displaced persons camps; however, the DoS funds NGOs working in the camps and communicates regularly with these organizations about conditions there. Through humanitarian partners, the DoS also provides funding for essential services at the al-Hol and Roj camps, including maintenance of physical infrastructure, the distribution of food, water, and other assistance, and the overall coordination of humanitarian assistance and liaison with the camp administration, which is run by the SANES.⁵³⁶

Additional information about repatriation and reintegration efforts in Syria is available in the classified appendix to this report.

Reintegration Programs Ease Syrians' Return to Their Home Communities

During the quarter, 260 internally displaced persons left al-Hol camp and returned to their home communities in Dayr az Zawr, the DoS reported. To support these returnees and limit negative impact on their communities, the DoS funded a civil society project that supported community reintegration through activities, such as sports, cultural events, and dialogue sessions.⁵³⁷ During the quarter, the DoS also funded projects to support essential service needs of reintegrating populations, including rehabilitating two agricultural complexes, cleaning drainage canals connected to a nearby water canal, and rehabilitating a drinking water pipeline to restore a village's access to drinking water. These efforts represent a small portion of the broad programming funded through the DoS that focuses on reintegration.⁵³⁸

HUMANITARIAN ASSISTANCE

The United Nations estimated that 14.6 million Syrians required humanitarian assistance during the quarter; 12 million Syrians did not have sufficient food.⁵³⁹ The USAID Bureau for Humanitarian Assistance (BHA) funds organizations that provide emergency food assistance; health services; and water, sanitation, and hygiene assistance; and shelter in Syria and to Syrian refugees living in neighboring countries. USAID BHA and the DoS Bureau of Population, Refugees and Migration (PRM) also support psychosocial programs; case management and referral services; and other programs to children and vulnerable individuals.⁵⁴⁰ (See page 80.)

Russian War in Ukraine Exacerbates Humanitarian Need

USAID BHA reported that the Russian invasion of Ukraine has major implications for food security across the world, given Russia and Ukraine's major roles in global food markets and Russia's prominence in global energy trade.⁵⁴¹ The World Food Programme (WFP) reported the conflict in Ukraine has led to increased food prices and supply chain-related fuel costs, including for ocean freight, land transportation, aviation, and WFP facilities.⁵⁴² USAID reported that in-country dispatches of food assistance are delayed as transportation companies face severe difficulties in securing fuel.⁵⁴³

USAID BHA reported that wheat price increases resulting from reduced supply from Ukraine led to increased WFP food procurement costs in Syria. Due to its dependency on wheat imports, Syria is significantly impacted by the war in Ukraine. Other essential commodities such as sugar and rice also faced shortages.⁵⁴⁴ USAID said that these impacts swell beyond WFP assistance as market prices of these commodities are increasing for the public.⁵⁴⁵ WFP reported in February that the nationwide average reference food basket price in Syria reached a new record high for the sixth consecutive month since WFP started price monitoring in 2013.⁵⁴⁶ Food prices in February were 34 percent higher than 6 months prior, and 71 percent higher compared to the same time last year. During the quarter, WFP food and voucher distribution centers experienced a large increase in non-WFP beneficiaries requesting assistance.⁵⁴⁷

Throughout the Middle East, the prices of staple commodities have increased, threatening to reduce household purchasing power among Syrian refugees and other vulnerable groups.⁵⁴⁸ In addition to wheat, USAID's NGO implementers serving northwestern Syria rely extensively on fertilizers, fuel and gas, and oil seeds from Ukraine and Russia.⁵⁴⁹ USAID said that it is likely that these supply chain concerns will lead to hyperinflation, supply shortages, unavailability of items, and loss of employment.⁵⁵⁰

COVID-19 Vaccine Deliveries Increase as Cases Spike

The World Health Organization (WHO) reported that as of the end of March, COVAX had delivered more than 10 million coronavirus disease-2019 (COVID-19) vaccine doses to Syria. An additional 2.75 million were received through bilateral agreements, which are enough to cover up to 42.8 percent of the population.⁵⁵¹ The Syria National Deployment and Vaccination Plan seeks to vaccinate 70 percent of the population by the end of 2022.⁵⁵²

SYRIA: U.S. ASSISTANCE SNAPSHOT

January 1, 2022–March 31, 2022

The United Nations 2022 Humanitarian Needs Overview for Syria identified 14.6 million people in need of humanitarian assistance countrywide, an increase of 1.2 million people compared to the previous year.

HASAKAH

As of mid-February, most of the approximately 45,000 Syrians displaced by the late January ISIS attack on the Ghwayran Detention Facility had returned to their homes, while approximately 100 people continued to shelter at a Hasakah city center.

IDLIB

Approximately 71 percent of Syrian households surveyed said that food and nutrition assistance are their most significant need in 2022. Idlib governorate experienced a nearly 50 percent increase in the number of people in need compared to 2021—the greatest increase nationwide—and has the largest population in “extreme and catastrophic need” of assistance at 2.3 million people, according to the United Nations.

DAR'A

January was the fifth consecutive month that food prices reached record highs across Syria, according to a recent WFP market price analysis. The price of the standard reference food basket increased significantly across all of Syria's 14 governorates in January compared to the same period in 2021, with the highest spike recorded in Dar'a governorate at approximately 110 percent.



14.6 million

Estimated Population In Need of Humanitarian Assistance

12 million

Estimated Number of Food Insecure People

6.9 million

Estimated Number of IDPs

5.5 million

Estimated Number of People Reached by USAID BHA per Month

2.1 million

People Reached by DoS PRM per Month

COVID-19 VACCINE ROLLOUT

As of March 26, 2022, more than **13 million** COVID-19 vaccine doses had been delivered in Syria, which covers **42.8 percent** of the population.

Allocated (COVAX)

12,507,800

Doses Delivered

- COVAX–AstraZeneca: **1,882,340**
- COVAX–J&J: **4,291,200**
- COVAX–Sinovac: **3,939,640**
- Bilateral–AstraZeneca: **368,640**
- Bilateral–Sinopharm: **1,995,000**
- Bilateral–Sputnik light/Sputnik V: **350,000**
- Bilateral–Soberana: **20,000**
- Bilateral–Abdala: **20,000**

Sources: UN OCHA, “Humanitarian Needs Overview: Syrian Arab Republic,” 2/2022; USAID, “Complex Emergency Fact Sheet #4 FY22,” 3/4/2022; UN OCHA, “COVID-19 Vaccine Doses in HRP Countries,” 3/29/2022; UN OCHA, WHO, “Update on COVID-19 Vaccination in Syria, 12 November 2021,” 11/12/2021; WHO, “COVAX Supply Update on COVID-19 Vaccination in Syria, 9 February 2022,” 2/9/2022; Al Mayadeen, “China Donates 500,000 COVID-19 Vaccines to Syria,” 11/14/2021; Reuters, “Syria gets Donation of 150,000 COVID Shots from China,” 4/24/2021; XinhuaNet, “Syria Receives 150,000 Doses of Chinese COVID-19 Vaccines,” 7/30/2021; Al Jazeera, “Syria Launches COVID Vaccine Drive as Israel Questions Swirl,” 3/17/2021; Tass, “Batch of Russia’s Sputnik Light Vaccine Delivered to Syria,” 7/24/2021.

USAID reported that Syria requires an additional 2.5 million vaccine doses to vaccinate 70 percent of government-held areas and northeastern Syria.⁵⁵³ WHO reported that vaccinations were provided at health centers across the country, as well as through mobile medical teams that offered vaccinations at other locations including shopping centers, mosques and churches, and the Syrian parliament.⁵⁵⁴ As of the end of March, over 3.3 million vaccine doses were administered in Syria, with more than 1.3 million people fully vaccinated, or approximately 7.5 percent of the population.⁵⁵⁵ However, vaccination rates in northeastern Syria lag behind the country overall; according to USAID 3 percent of northeastern Syria is fully vaccinated.⁵⁵⁶

According to WHO, COVID-19 cases across Syria spiked in February before decreasing in March.⁵⁵⁷ However, cases continued to rise throughout the quarter in northwest Syria, which WHO attributed to the Omicron variant detected through whole genomic sequencing of samples.⁵⁵⁸ Northeastern Syria continued to have limited laboratory testing capacity which limited the number of confirmed cases detected, according to WHO.⁵⁵⁹ USAID reported that during the quarter an NGO donated 18,000 COVID-19 test kits and other laboratory supplies to the central laboratory in Qamishli to prevent imminent disruption to the facility's operations, and plans another donation of 87,000 PCR test kits at the end of the quarter.⁵⁶⁰ This would sustain operations for another month; however, USAID BHA indicated that consistent and sustainable cross-line support was required to ensure stable operation of COVID-19 testing at the laboratory.⁵⁶¹

The DoS reported that there were no confirmed cases of COVID-19 in the al-Hol and Roj camps during the quarter.⁵⁶² During the quarter USAID BHA continued to support hygiene promotion and COVID-19 awareness through health actors.⁵⁶³ In northeastern Syria, a BHA implementer coordinated sessions on personal hygiene, COVID-19 knowledge, attitudes, and practices, and community health worker-led COVID-19 awareness. In northwestern Syria, a BHA implementer trained healthcare workers on COVID-19 messaging, including updates on the Omicron variant, and delivered door-to-door hygiene promotion.⁵⁶⁴

Vaccination Rollout Complicated by Delivery Challenges

The WHO reported that the late arrival of vaccines and the short expiry dates of some vaccine shipments challenged the vaccination campaign. Additionally, the lack of diversity of vaccine types delivered by COVAX and vaccine hesitancy among the population impacted vaccination rates.⁵⁶⁵

UN agencies use the Bab al-Hawa border crossing between Turkey and northwestern Syria to reach approximately 2.3 million people each month with life-saving food, shelter, health, and water, sanitation, and hygiene assistance. The DoS reported that the WHO COVID-19 vaccination campaign plan for northwestern Syria, which aims to vaccinate 1.7 million high-risk individuals, is completely reliant on vaccine delivery via Bab al-Hawa.⁵⁶⁶ In northeastern Syria, mobile and fixed teams provided vaccinations in Hasakah governorate, while in Raqqah governorate vaccines were offered at three fixed sites. In eastern Dayr az Zawr vaccines were provided through mobile teams.⁵⁶⁷

USAID Responds to COVID-19 through Stabilization Projects

During the quarter, the USAID Essential Services project continued to provide funding to multiple infrastructure and capacity building projects that support the COVID-19 response. In Hasakah governorate, USAID supported the Jazeera Health Commission to establish an oxygen plant which will produce 200 oxygen cylinders per day starting in April, open a separate COVID-19 isolation hospital ward, and establish solar powered cold storage rooms for COVID-19 and other vaccines.⁵⁶⁸ USAID also supported the Raqqah Health Committee to establish a health and epidemic response skills development center which will enhance capacity of medical staff responding to COVID-19 and convert a center to treat COVID-19 patients.⁵⁶⁹ USAID reported that it rehabilitated the health infrastructure at nine clinics in Hasakah and Raqqah governorates. The health clinics now serve 25,000 people per month.⁵⁷⁰

During the quarter, USAID also awarded a cooperative agreement to support the Syrian Civil Defense (also known as the White Helmets) to provide emergency medical services and support for women's health centers in northwestern Syria.⁵⁷¹







Coils of razor wire sit at Al Asad Air Base, Iraq for delivery to Iraqi Border Security units. (U.S. Army photo)

OVERSIGHT ACTIVITIES

- 86 Strategic Planning
- 88 Audit, Inspection,
and Evaluation Activity
- 94 Investigations
and Hotline Activity

OVERSIGHT ACTIVITIES

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

STRATEGIC PLANNING

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

FY 2022 Joint Strategic Oversight Plan Activities

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

The *FY 2022 Joint Strategic Oversight Plan for OIR* was published on November 8, 2021, as part of the *FY 2022 Comprehensive Oversight Plan for Overseas Contingency Operations*. The *FY 2022 Joint Strategic Oversight Plan for OIR* is organized by three strategic oversight areas: 1) Military Operations and Security Cooperation; 2) Governance, Humanitarian Assistance, and Development; and 3) Support to Mission.

The Overseas Contingency Operations Joint Planning Group serves as a primary venue to coordinate audits, inspections, and evaluations of U.S. Government-funded activities supporting overseas contingency operations, including those relating to the Middle East. The Joint Planning Group meets quarterly to provide a forum for coordination of the broader Federal oversight community, including the military service IGs and audit agencies, the Government Accountability Office, and the OIGs of the Departments of Justice, Treasury, Energy, and Homeland Security.

In February 2022, the Joint Planning Group held its 57th meeting, carried out virtually to accommodate participants because of coronavirus disease–2019 (COVID-19) precautions. U.S. Air Force Brig. Gen. Brandon Parker, Chief of Staff, Combined Joint Task Force OIR, spoke of the ongoing efforts to combat ISIS in Iraq and Syria.



**FY 2022
Comprehensive
Oversight Plan
for Overseas
Contingency
Operations**

Lead IG Strategic Oversight Areas

MILITARY OPERATIONS AND SECURITY COOPERATION

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

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

GOVERNANCE, HUMANITARIAN ASSISTANCE, AND DEVELOPMENT

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

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

SUPPORT TO MISSION

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

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

AUDIT, INSPECTION, AND EVALUATION ACTIVITY

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

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

The Lead IG agencies and their partner agencies completed eight reports related to OIR during the quarter. These reports examined various activities that support OIR, including whether the DoD effectively distributed and administered the COVID-19 vaccine to the DoD workforce; DoS fuel management at overseas posts; oversight of cooperative agreements awarded to the Global Engagement Center; and USAID management of awards and humanitarian assistance programs in Iraq and Syria.

As of March 31, 2022, 11 projects related to OIR were ongoing and 7 projects related to OIR were planned.

Final Reports by Lead IG Agencies

DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE OFFICE OF INSPECTOR GENERAL

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

DODIG-2022-058; February 1, 2022

The DoD OIG conducted this audit to determine whether DoD officials effectively distributed and administered the coronavirus disease–2019 (COVID-19) vaccine to the DoD workforce in accordance with DoD guidance.

The DoD COVID-19 Vaccination Plan (the plan) served as the DoD's integrated global response plan to distribute and administer the COVID-19 vaccine. The plan provided the DoD's framework for distributing and administering the vaccine to the DoD workforce and eligible DoD beneficiaries to ensure DoD readiness and mission assurance. The DoD OIG determined that while the DoD strived to vaccinate its workforce against COVID-19 as quickly as possible, DoD officials did not have reliable data on which to base vaccine allocation decisions, or determine if they effectively administered the COVID-19 vaccine to the DoD workforce. Specifically, DoD officials could not definitively determine the vaccine-eligible population at each military treatment facility and had difficulty reporting reliable vaccine administration data. Additional difficulties included how to ensure that local nationals who work alongside U.S. personnel at overseas locations—including those that support OIR—are vaccinated. Failure to address the difficulties and challenges encountered by the DoD while distributing and administering the COVID-19 vaccine could degrade operational readiness.



U.S. medical personnel administer COVID-19 vaccines to Service Members at Erbil Air Base, Iraq. (U.S. Army National Guard photo)

The DoD OIG recommended that the Defense Health Agency Director, with input from the Military Departments, the National Guard Bureau, and other stakeholders, review challenges and difficulties encountered during the distribution and administration of the COVID-19 vaccine, compile a report detailing the issues, and determine if corrective actions are necessary to support future pandemic response planning. The Defense Health Agency Director disagreed with the recommendation, stating that the Defense Health Agency already prepared an after-action report describing challenges and difficulties during the distribution and administration of the COVID-19 vaccine. The recommendation remains unresolved.

In addition, the DoD OIG recommended that the Assistant Secretary of Defense, Health Affairs form and lead a working group consisting of DoD Components and address the issues identified by the Defense Health Agency. The Senior Official Performing the Duties of the Assistant Secretary of Defense, Health Affairs agreed with this recommendation; therefore, this recommendation is resolved but will remain open.

DEPARTMENT OF STATE OFFICE OF INSPECTOR GENERAL

Information Report: Systemic Deficiencies Related to the Department of State's Fuel Management from FY 2016 through FY 2020

AUD-MERO-22-20, March 21, 2022

Proper management of fuel at DoS posts abroad is critical for successful overseas operations. From FY 2016 through FY 2020, the DoS OIG issued 43 unclassified reports that identified deficiencies in managing the acquisition, storage, distribution, and monitoring of fuel at 43 overseas missions, many of them in the OIR and Operation Freedom's Sentinel areas of responsibility, including Embassy Baghdad and Embassy Kabul. In this report, the DoS OIG summarized the findings of those earlier reports to identify systemic weaknesses in the DoS's management of its overseas fuel stock and to gauge the DoS's progress toward addressing these deficiencies.

The earlier reports addressed deficiencies in several broad categories, including insufficient documentation and document review, improper fuel acceptance procedures, and

shortcomings with fuel equipment. These deficiencies occurred for a variety of reasons but commonly because overseas posts (1) did not always exercise strong management oversight, (2) did not implement management control activities through policies and procedures, (3) did not demonstrate a commitment to the competence of staff members, and (4) had competing priorities. To address these deficiencies, in the 43 fuel-related reports, the DoS OIG issued 156 recommendations. As of September 2021, 147 of the 156 recommendations had been implemented and closed. For the nine recommendations that remained open, the DoS OIG found that overseas posts had begun taking corrective actions to address each. Because the DoS had acted or was taking action to implement the nine open recommendations, the DoS OIG made no new recommendations in this report.

In response to a draft of this report, the DoS Under Secretary for Management stated that he would ask the DoS's Foreign Service Institute and Diplomatic Security Training Directorate to include the findings and results from this report in applicable training. The Under Secretary for Management also stated that the Bureau of Overseas Buildings Operations will use this report as a lessons-learned training tool and will continue to emphasize to overseas posts the importance of proper fuel management.

Management Assistance Report: Internal Controls are Needed to Safeguard Inherently Governmental Functions at the Global Engagement Center

AUD-MERO-22-19, February 22, 2022

During an ongoing audit of the DoS's cooperative agreements related to Iran, DoS OIG identified instances in which Global Engagement Center (GEC) contractors were performing inherently Governmental functions, which may only be performed by Federal employees.

The DoS OIG reviewed five cooperative agreements awarded by GEC from FY 2018 through FY 2020 and found that third-party contractors were assigned to perform inherently governmental functions for four of the five cooperative agreements. For these four cooperative agreements, contractors were improperly assigned to approve project work plans. The DoS OIG also identified two instances in which contractors performed inherently Governmental functions by directing award recipients' messaging on sensitive topics related to Iran. These deficiencies occurred, in part, because GEC's policies and procedures manual did not clearly delineate the inherently governmental activities of a grants officer representative from the activities of contractors assigned as project officers.

The DoS OIG also found that GEC did not designate grants officer representatives throughout the period of performance of the cooperative agreements reviewed and did not notify award recipients about changes in grants officer representatives assigned to each cooperative agreement. DoS policies require that a grants officer representative be designated for cooperative agreements and that award recipients be notified of changes in the designation of grants officer representatives during the lifetime of the award.

The DoS OIG made nine recommendations in this report. Based on GEC's response to a draft of the report, the DoS OIG considered all nine recommendations resolved pending further action at the time the report was released.

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

Financial Audit Report of Shell Foundation for the Year Ended December 31, 2016

3-000-22-010-R; March 7, 2022

The Shell Foundation contracted with an accounting firm to express an opinion on whether the organization's fund accountability statement for the year ended December 31, 2016 was presented fairly, to evaluate Shell Foundation's internal controls, and to determine whether the Shell Foundation complied with award terms, applicable laws, and regulations. The audit covered USAID audited expenditures for \$802,670, which included an award in Iraq. Auditors determined that the fund accountability statement was presented fairly, except for \$132,497 in total questioned costs. The audit firm also questioned \$252,670 as an unexplained excess of incurred costs over the budget for one of the audited USAID awards. The audit firm identified a material weakness in internal controls for the lack of financial reports detailing costs charged against the project by subrecipients, and the lack of detailed review of such reports. In addition, the audit firm found two instances of material noncompliance due to unsupported staff leave accrual, and non-staff costs charged to the project. USAID OIG made four recommendations for USAID to determine the allowability of questioned costs, and to verify that the Shell Foundation corrects the material weakness in internal controls, and the two instances of material noncompliance.

Financial Audit of Agency for Technical Co-operation and Development Under Multiple USAID Agreements for the Fiscal Year Ended December 31, 2019

3-000-22-009-R; February 15, 2022

The Agency for Technical Co-operation and Development (ACTED) contracted with an accounting firm to determine whether the organization's fund accountability statement for the year ended December 31, 2019, was presented fairly, to evaluate ACTED's internal controls, and to determine whether it complied with award terms, applicable laws, and regulations. The audit covered USAID audited expenditures for \$79,725,310, which included awards in Iraq, Syria, and Afghanistan. Auditors determined that ACTED's fund accountability statement was presented fairly. The audit firm did not identify any significant deficiencies or material weaknesses in internal controls and reported no material instances of noncompliance. The audit firm also did not report any findings or questioned costs related to USAID awards. USAID OIG did not make any recommendations.

Financial Audit of Handicap International Federation under Multiple Awards, for the Fiscal Year Ended December 31, 2018

3-000-22-006-R; January 21, 2022

The Handicap International Federation contracted an accounting firm to express an opinion on whether the organization's fund accountability statement for the year ended December 31, 2018, was presented fairly, to evaluate the Handicap International Federation's internal control, and to determine whether the Handicap International Federation complied with award terms, applicable laws, and regulations. The audit covered USAID expenditures

totaling \$19,148,349, which included awards in Iraq and Syria. Auditors determined that the Handicap International Federation's fund accountability statement was presented fairly. The audit firm identified \$27,674 in direct questioned costs and \$6,866 in indirect questioned costs. The audit firm also identified two significant deficiencies in internal controls that were also considered to be instances of noncompliance. USAID OIG recommended that USAID determine the allowability of \$27,674 in direct questioned costs and recover any unallowable amount. USAID OIG did not make recommendations for the significant deficiencies and instances of noncompliance, but suggested that USAID determine if the recipient addressed the issues noted.

Financial Audit Report of Shell Foundation for the Year Ended December 31, 2015

3-000-22-005-R; January 5, 2022

The Shell Foundation contracted with an accounting firm to express an opinion on whether the organization's fund accountability statement for the year ended December 31, 2015, was presented fairly; to evaluate the Shell Foundation's internal controls; and to determine whether Shell Foundation complied with award terms, applicable laws, and regulations. The audit covered USAID expenditures for \$4 million, which included an award in Iraq. Auditors determined the fund accountability statement was presented fairly, did not identify any significant deficiencies or material weaknesses in internal controls, and reported no material instances of noncompliance. The audit firm also did not report any questioned costs. USAID OIG did not make any recommendations.

Water, Sanitation, and Hygiene (WASH) Programming: USAID Faced Challenges Providing Assistance to Countries with Greatest Need

8-000-22-001-P; January 3, 2022

USAID OIG conducted this audit to determine to what extent USAID designated high priority countries and allocated water, sanitation, and hygiene (WASH) funding based on the Senator Paul Simon Water for the World Act of 2015.

The Act directs USAID to designate high priority countries based on the WASH Needs Index, which ranks countries based on factors including usage of improved water and sanitation sources and facilities, hygiene behaviors, child mortality from diarrheal disease, and open defecation rates. USAID OIG conducted the audit to determine 1) the extent to which USAID designated high priority countries consistent with the criteria and indicators in the Act; 2) the challenges USAID faced in allocating funding to high priority countries in accordance with the Act; and 3) the extent to which USAID complied with congressional reporting requirements under the Act. USAID provides critical WASH assistance throughout the world, including in Iraq and Syria.

The audit found that USAID's ranking system led to countries with low WASH needs being designated as high priority countries. In addition, USAID lacked authority to make final funding decisions and provided higher funding to high priority countries with low demonstrated need. The final authority for funding rests with the DoS. From FYs 2016 to 2019, USAID did not meet the requirement that high priority countries must receive at least

50 percent of WASH funding. The audit also found that USAID did not report complete and timely information to Congress.

To improve USAID’s compliance with the reporting requirement of the Act, USAID OIG made one recommendation for USAID’s Office of Legislative and Public Affairs to establish and implement procedures to ensure that congressional reporting is timely and complete, including reporting on planned funding for countries outside of the Top 50 of the WASH Needs Index. Management agreed with the recommendation.

Ongoing Oversight Activities

As of March 31, 2022, the Lead IG agencies and their partner agencies had 11 ongoing projects related to OIR. Figure 9 describes the ongoing projects by strategic oversight area.

Tables 12 and 13, contained in Appendix E, lists the title and objective for each of these projects.

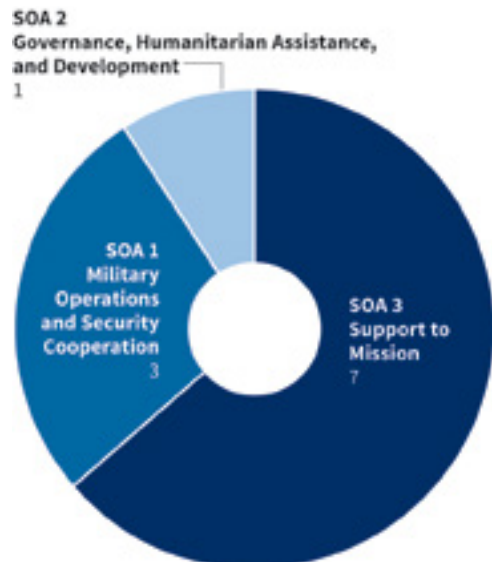
The following sections highlight some of these ongoing projects by strategic oversight area.

MILITARY OPERATIONS AND SECURITY COOPERATION

- The **DoD OIG** is conducting an audit to determine whether the Army effectively managed DoD language interpretation and translation contracts in the OIR area of responsibility.
- The **DoD OIG** is conducting an audit to determine whether vetted Syrian opposition groups met DoD requirements prior to receiving DoD funds.

Figure 9.

Ongoing Projects by Strategic Oversight Area



GOVERNANCE, HUMANITARIAN ASSISTANCE, AND DEVELOPMENT

- **USAID OIG** is conducting an evaluation of USAID’s policies and procedures related to sanctions in Syria.

SUPPORT TO MISSION

- The **DoD OIG** is conducting a follow up evaluation to determine whether corrective actions were taken as identified in the 2019 “Evaluation of DoD Efforts to Combat Trafficking in Persons in Kuwait,” related to contractors at facilities supporting OIR.
- The **DoS OIG** is conducting an audit to determine whether the U.S. Embassy in Baghdad implemented internal controls to account for and manage personal property in accordance with Federal requirements and DoS regulations.

Planned Oversight Projects

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

Table 14, contained in Appendix E, list the titles and objectives for each of these projects. The following sections highlight some of these planned projects by strategic oversight area.

MILITARY OPERATIONS AND SECURITY COOPERATION

- The **DoD OIG** intends to conduct an evaluation to determine whether the National Geospatial-Intelligence Agency is collecting, analyzing, and distributing geospatial intelligence in support of Combatant Commands' intelligence requirements in accordance with law and DoD policy and guidance, including requirements in the OIR area of responsibility.

SUPPORT TO MISSION

- The **DoD OIG** is conducting an audit to determine whether the DoD is effectively monitoring sensitive equipment provided to the Iraqi government.
- The **DoD OIG** intends to conduct an audit to determine whether the Army is meeting mission goals associated with implementing a program to modernize equipment sets in the USCENTCOM area of responsibility, to include Kuwait in support of OIR.
- The **DoS OIG** intends to conduct an audit to determine whether the DoS considered existing and future electrical power needs and infrastructure of the U.S. Embassy in Baghdad when designing the new power plant, conducted oversight of the construction and commissioning of the new power plant, and took measures to mitigate design or construction deficiencies, if any.

INVESTIGATIONS AND HOTLINE ACTIVITY

Investigations

The investigative components of the Lead IG agencies and their partner agencies continued to conduct investigative activity related to OIR during the quarter. However, COVID-19 limitations led to a decrease in the overall number of open investigations. The DoD OIG's criminal investigative component, the Defense Criminal Investigative Service (DCIS), maintained investigative personnel in Bahrain, Kuwait, and Qatar, where they worked on cases related to OIR. DCIS agents also worked on OIR-related cases from offices in the United States. DoS OIG and USAID OIG investigators worked on cases related to OIR from Washington, D.C.

INVESTIGATIVE ACTIVITY RELATED TO OIR

During the quarter, the investigative branches of the Lead IG agencies and their partner agencies closed 8 investigations, initiated 7 new investigations, and coordinated on 78 open

Figure 10.

Planned Projects by Strategic Oversight Area

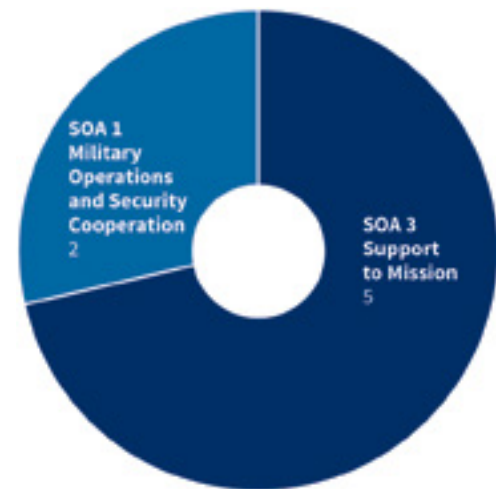
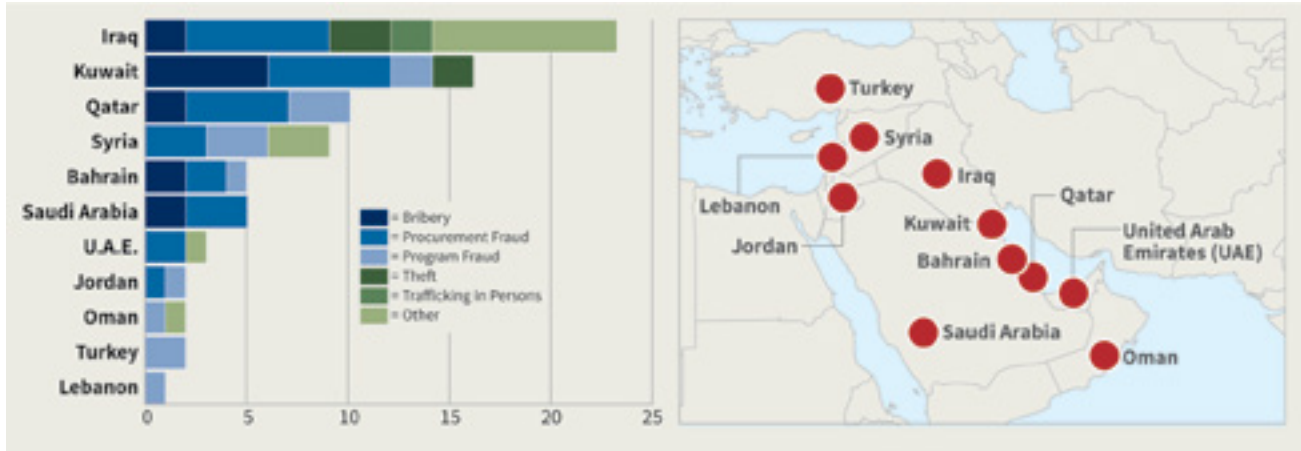


Figure 11.

Types of Allegations and Primary Offense Locations, January 1, 2022–March 31, 2022.



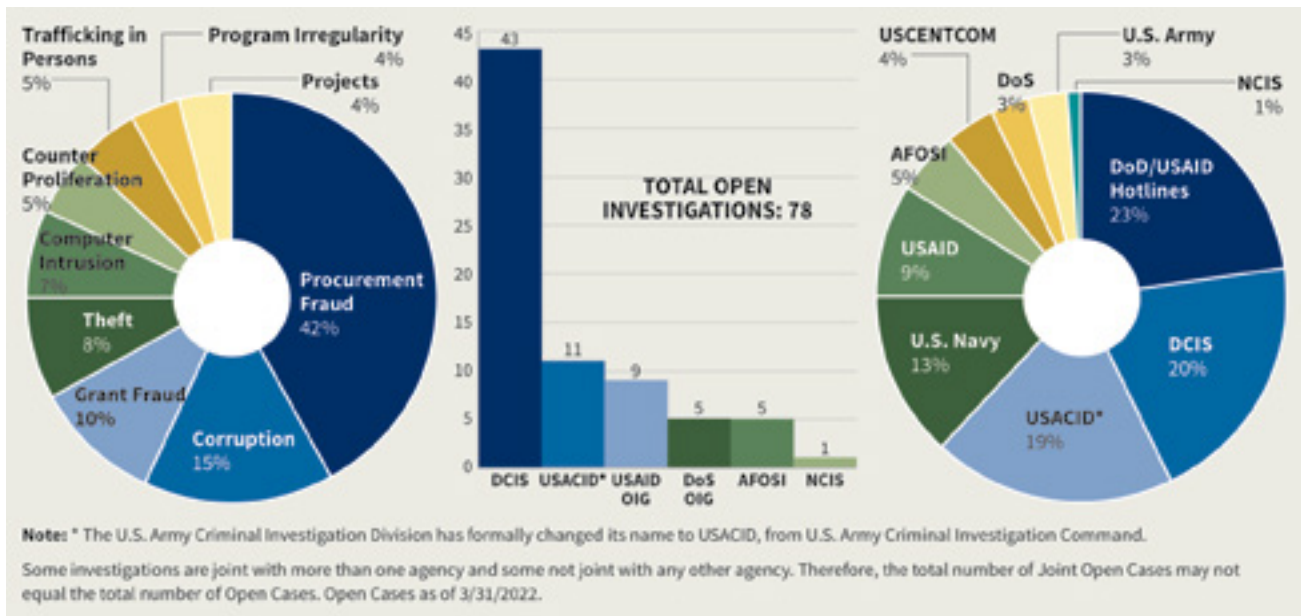
investigations. The open investigations involve grant and procurement fraud, corruption, theft, program irregularities, computer intrusions, and human trafficking allegations.

As noted in Figure 11, the majority of primary offense locations and allegations related to OIR originated in Iraq and Kuwait.

The Lead IG agencies and partners continued to coordinate their investigative efforts through the Fraud and Corruption Investigative Working Group, which consists of

Figure 12.

Open Investigations and Sources of Allegations, January 1, 2022–March 31, 2022.



representatives from DCIS, the DoS OIG, USAID OIG, the U.S. Army Criminal Investigation Division, the Naval Criminal Investigative Service, and the Air Force Office of Special Investigations.

Figure 12 describes open investigations related to OIR and sources of allegations.

During the quarter, the Fraud and Corruption Investigative Working Group conducted 55 fraud awareness briefings for 443 participants.

INVESTIGATIVE ACTIVITY RELATED TO LEGACY CASES

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

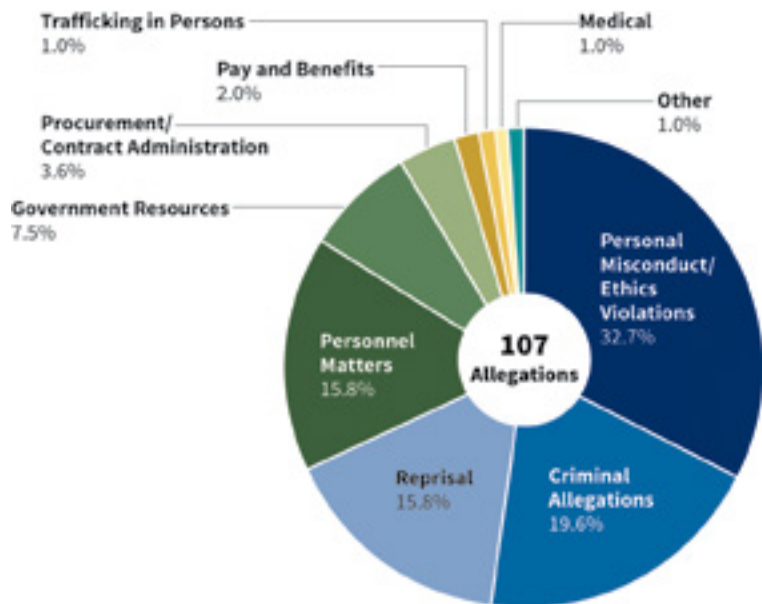
Hotline

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

During the quarter, the DoD OIG hotline investigator received 107 allegations and referred 68 cases to Lead IG agencies and other investigative organizations. In some instances, it is possible for a case to contain multiple subjects and allegations.


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

Figure 13.
Hotline Activities









U.S. Soldiers conduct night cargo operations with a U.S. Air Force C-17 Globemaster in northeast Syria. (U.S. Army Photo)

APPENDICES

- 100 Appendix A: Classified Appendix to this Report
- 100 Appendix B: Methodology for Preparing this Lead IG Quarterly Report
- 101 Appendix C: Department of Justice Prosecutions and Activities Against Terrorism
- 103 Appendix D: Department of the Treasury and Department of State Actions Against Terrorist Financing
- 105 Appendix E: Ongoing Oversight Projects
- 107 Appendix F: Planned Oversight Projects
- 108 Acronyms
- 109 Endnotes

APPENDIX A

Classified Appendix to this Report

A classified appendix to this report provides additional information on Operation Inherent Resolve, as noted in several sections of this report. The classified appendix combines information relevant to the first and second quarters of FY 2022. The DoD OIG received classified information for the first quarter but was unable to prepare an appendix that quarter because of constraints resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic. This quarter's classified appendix will be delivered to relevant agencies and congressional committees.

APPENDIX B

Methodology for Preparing this Lead IG Quarterly Report

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

This report covers the period from January 1 through March 31, 2022. The three Lead IG agencies—DoD OIG, DoS OIG, and USAID OIG—and partner oversight agencies contributed the content of this report.

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

INFORMATION COLLECTION FROM AGENCIES AND OPEN SOURCES

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

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

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

REPORT PRODUCTION

The DoD IG, as the Lead IG for this operation, is responsible for assembling and producing this report. The DoD OIG, the DoS OIG, and USAID OIG draft the sections of the report related to the activities of their agencies and then participate in editing the entire report. Once the report is assembled, each OIG coordinates a two-phase review process within its own agency. During the first review, the Lead IG agencies ask relevant offices within their agencies to comment, correct inaccuracies, and provide additional documentation. The Lead IG agencies incorporate agency comments, where appropriate, and send the report back to the agencies for a second review prior to publication. The final report reflects the editorial view of the DoD OIG, the DoS OIG, and USAID OIG as independent oversight agencies.

APPENDIX C

Department of Justice Prosecutions and Activities Against Terrorism

Since 2014, the Department of Justice (DoJ) has charged more than 215 individuals with international terrorism-related conduct relating to ISIS, and obtained more than 165 convictions. The remaining cases are ongoing. A portion of the aforementioned cases involve individuals who could be described as foreign terrorist fighters or homegrown violent extremists linked to ISIS, as well as those who may have assisted their conduct, obstructed investigations, or otherwise involved an identified link to ISIS.

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

- **On January 19, 2022, in the Southern District of Florida, Samuel Baptiste** was sentenced to 15 years in prison for attempting to provide material support to terrorism. The judge ordered that the sentence take effect after an 80-month sentence that Baptiste is currently serving for being a felon in possession of a firearm. On October 22, 2021, Baptiste pled guilty to attempting to provide material support to terrorism. According to court documents, Baptiste provided to persons he believed were acting on behalf of ISIS information on constructing explosive devices.
- **On March 14, 2022, in the Western District of Washington, Elvin Hunter Bgorn Williams** pled guilty to providing material support to a designated foreign terrorist organization. On May 28, 2021, Williams was arrested at Seattle-Tacoma International Airport on criminal charges related to his alleged efforts to join ISIS to engage in violent acts of terrorism in the Middle East or the United States. According to the plea agreement, in November 2020, Williams began telling family members he was a member of ISIS. Williams posted a video on Facebook in which he swore an oath of loyalty to a leader of ISIS. Using confidential sources close to Williams, the FBI monitored his activity and became aware of his efforts to travel to the Middle East and join ISIS. Williams expressed to his associates that if he could not travel overseas, he would commit an attack in the United States on behalf of ISIS.

In addition, 13 people have been transferred to the United States from Iraq and Syria to face federal criminal charges related to terrorism since 2014.

The DoJ's new Justice Attaché arrived in Baghdad on January 19, 2022, and began working to resume DoJ programs designed to train Coalition partners in Iraq and Syria on law enforcement and domestic intelligence as part of counter-ISIS operations. During this quarter the new Justice Attaché engaged on counterterrorism matters, including the countering of the financing of terrorism. For example, the

Justice Attaché participated in a legal symposium hosted by the European Union Advisory Mission-Iraq with the aim of revising criminal penalties and provisions set forth in Iraqi law related to Antiquities and Heritage of Iraq used to criminalize terrorist financing.

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

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

Other DoJ programs continued, including through the DoJ's Office of International Affairs, which assists partner nations in developing institutions needed for effective mutual legal assistance and extradition cooperation. In coordination with the DoS, experts from the DoJ Office of International Affairs worked with international counterparts, particularly throughout Asia, Africa, and the Middle East, to help partner countries build effective central authorities. These institutions support effective international cooperation in criminal matters and enable the legal processes necessary to bring terrorists and other criminals to justice under the rule of law.

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

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

APPENDIX D

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

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

DEPARTMENT OF THE TREASURY DESIGNATIONS AND ACTIVITIES

Since 2014, the Secretary of the Treasury has designated 104 individuals and entities providing support to ISIS pursuant to Executive Order 13224. The Secretary of the Treasury sanctioned four South Africa-based ISIS financial facilitators during this quarter. The sanctioned entities are as follows:

- **Farhad Hooper** was sanctioned for having materially assisted, sponsored, or provided financial, material, or technological support for, or goods or services to or in support of, ISIS. Between 2017 and 2018, Hooper helped organize and begin the operations of a Durban, South Africa-based ISIS cell. Hooper, the leader of the Durban-based ISIS cell, provided some of his known residential properties and vehicles registered in his name to sponsor the cell's meetings and operational activities. In his role, Hooper claimed to have recruited and trained cell members and was in contact with members of ISIS-Democratic Republic of the Congo and ISIS supporters throughout South Africa. Hooper raised funds through kidnap-for-ransom operations and extortion of major businesses, which provided more than one million South African rand in revenue for his cell. In 2018, South African authorities arrested Hooper, along with his associates, for their involvement in a plan to deploy improvised incendiary devices near a mosque and commercial and retail buildings.
- **Siraaj Miller** was sanctioned for having materially assisted, sponsored, or provided financial, material, or technological support for, or goods or services to or in support of, ISIS. Miller, who leads a Cape Town-based group of ISIS supporters, provided financial assistance to ISIS by training members to conduct robberies to raise funds for ISIS. In 2018, Miller also aided in acquiring temporary safe houses for ISIS.
- **Abdella Hussein Abadigga** was sanctioned for having materially assisted, sponsored, or provided financial, material, or technological support for, or goods or services to or in support of, ISIS. Abadigga recruited young men in South Africa and sent them to a weapons training camp. Abadigga, who controlled two mosques in South Africa, used his position to extort money from members of the mosques. Abadigga sent these funds via a hawala to ISIS supporters elsewhere in Africa. Bilal al-Sudani, a U.S. designated ISIS leader in Somalia, considered Abadigga a trusted supporter who could help ISIS supporters in South Africa become better organized and recruit new members.
- **Peter Charles Mbaga** was sanctioned for having materially assisted, sponsored, or provided financial, material, or technological support for, or goods or services to or in support of, ISIS-Mozambique (ISIS-M). Mbaga facilitated funds transfers from South Africa. Mbaga sought to provide support to ISIS-M by helping the group procure equipment from South Africa. Mbaga also sought to procure weapons from Mozambique.

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

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

Treasury continued to work with interagency and Coalition partners, including the Iraqi government, to prioritize identifying ISIS's financial reserves and financial leaders, disrupting its financial facilitation networks in Iraq, and designating ISIS facilitators, front companies, and fundraisers in Iraq, Syria, Turkey, and elsewhere. Treasury also takes a leadership role in the Global Coalition to Defeat ISIS, serving as a co-lead of the Counter ISIS Finance Group along with its counterparts from Italy and Saudi Arabia.

Treasury reported that ISIS's financial situation remained largely unchanged since last quarter. ISIS continued to raise funds through extortion of oil smuggling networks in eastern Syria, kidnapping for ransom targeting civilian businesses and populations, extortion, looting, and the possible operation of front companies. The group relied on money services businesses, including hawalas (informal money transfer networks), throughout Iraq, Syria, and Turkey to transfer funds internationally. ISIS probably has tens of millions of U.S. dollars available in cash reserves dispersed across the region, but Treasury was not aware of the amount of money ISIS distributed during this quarter.

DEPARTMENT OF STATE DESIGNATIONS

On March 7, the Department of State announced that it was designating Katibat al Tawhid wal Jihad as a Specially Designated Global Terrorist pursuant to Executive Order 13224. Affiliated with al-Qaeda, Katibat al Tawhid wal Jihad conducts terrorist activities in Syria. According to the DoS, Katibat al Tawhid wal Jihad was also responsible for conducting external attacks, such as the Saint Petersburg metro attack in April 2017 that killed 14 passengers and injured 50 others, as well as a suicide car bombing of the Chinese Embassy in Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan in August 2016 that wounded 3 people.



APPENDIX E

Ongoing Oversight Projects

Tables 12 and 13 list the title and objective for Lead IG and partner agencies' ongoing oversight projects related to OIR.

Table 12.

Ongoing Oversight Projects Related to OIR by Lead IG Agency, as of March 31, 2022

DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE OFFICE OF INSPECTOR GENERAL

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

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

Audit of the DoD Counter-Islamic State of Iraq and Syria Train and Equip Fund Stipends to the Vetted Syrian Opposition

To determine if the DoD assessed whether Vetted Syrian Opposition groups met DoD requirements prior to the DoD providing stipends from the Counter-Islamic State of Iraq and Syria Train and Equip Fund for Syria to the Vetted Syrian Opposition.

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

To determine whether the DoD implemented corrective actions for the recommendations in report DODIG-2019-088, "Evaluation of DoD Efforts to Combat Trafficking in Persons in Kuwait," June 11, 2019, which is related to contractors at facilities supporting OIR.

Audit of Army Accountability of Government-Furnished Property Under Base Operations Contracts in Kuwait

To determine whether the Army effectively accounted for Government-Furnished Property provided to the base operations and security support services contractor in Kuwait at facilities that support OIR.

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

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

Evaluation of the DoD's Management of Traumatic Brain Injury

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

DEPARTMENT OF STATE OFFICE OF INSPECTOR GENERAL

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

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

Inspection of Embassy Kuwait City, Kuwait

To evaluate the programs and operations of the U.S. Embassy in Kuwait City, Kuwait. This inspection will also produce a report with classified findings.

Audit of USAID’s New Partnerships Initiative

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

Evaluation of USAID’s Sanctions Policies and Procedures

To assess USAID policies and procedures for obtaining Office of Foreign Assets Control licenses and adhering to U.S. Government sanctions in humanitarian settings and evaluate how USAID identifies, analyzes, and responds to implementer risks and challenges related to sanctions in Syria.

Table 13.

Ongoing Oversight Projects Related to OIR by Lead IG Partner Agencies, as of March 31, 2021

ARMY AUDIT AGENCY

Acquisition Cross-Servicing Agreement Accountability

To determine whether the Army had processes in place to accurately record acquisition and cross-servicing agreement orders in Kuwait, including those that support OIR.



APPENDIX F

Planned Oversight Projects

Table 14 lists the titles and objectives for Lead IG planned oversight projects.

Table 14.

Planned Oversight Projects Related to OIR by Lead IG Agencies, as of March 31, 2022

DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE OFFICE OF INSPECTOR GENERAL

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

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

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

To determine whether the Army's implementation of the modernized enduring equipment sets in the U.S. Central Command area of responsibility is meeting mission goals.

Follow up Audit of Management of Army Prepositioned Equipment

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

Evaluation of the Use of Compartmented Geospatial Intelligence Collection for Operation Inherent Resolve

To evaluate National Geospatial-Intelligence Agency and U.S. Central Command intelligence collection in support of OIR.

DEPARTMENT OF STATE OFFICE OF INSPECTOR GENERAL

Audit of the U.S. Embassy Baghdad, Iraq Power Plant Performance

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

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

To determine whether the DoS is administering the PAE operations and maintenance contract for the U.S. Embassy in Baghdad, Iraq in accordance with Federal and DoS requirements and whether PAE is operating in accordance with the contract terms and conditions.

Audit of Physical Security Standards for Temporary Facilities at High Threat Posts

To determine whether the DoS has instituted internal control procedures and standardized designs to meet applicable physical security standards for temporary structures used at high-threat, high-risk posts, including posts in Iraq.

ACRONYMS

Acronym	
ACTED	Agency for Technical Co-operation and Development
BDSC	Baghdad Diplomatic Support Center
BHA	USAID Bureau of Humanitarian Assistance
CAC	Compound Access Control
CJTF-OIR	Combined Joint Task Force–Operation Inherent Resolve
COVID-19	coronavirus disease–2019
CTEF	Counter-ISIS Train and Equip Fund
CTS	Counter Terrorism Service
DIA	Defense Intelligence Agency
DoD	Department of Defense
DoJ	Department of Justice
DoS	Department of State
GEC	Global Engagement Center
GBV	gender-based violence
IDP	internally displaced person
IED	improvised explosive device
INIS	Iraqi National Intelligence Service
IOM	International Organization for Migration
ISF	Iraqi Security Forces
ISIS	Islamic State of Iraq and Syria
ISOF	Iraqi Special Operations Force
ISR	intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance
ITAC	Iraqi Terminal Air Controller
JOC-I	Joint Operations Command–Iraq
KCL	Kurdish Coordination Line
KDP	Kurdistan Democratic Party
KRG	Kurdistan Regional Government
KSF	Kurdish Security Forces
Lead IG agencies	The DoD, DoS, and USAID OIGs
MAG	Military Advisory Group

Acronym	
MaT	Mughawir al-Thawra
MoPA	Ministry of Peshmerga Affairs
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organization
NGO	non-governmental organization
OBO	DoS Bureau of Overseas Buildings Operations
OIG	Office of Inspector General
OIR	Operation Inherent Resolve
OSC-I	Office of Security Cooperation–Iraq
PKK	Kurdistan Workers’ Party
PrISF	Provincial Internal Security Forces
PRM	DoS Bureau of Population, Refugees, and Migration
PUK	Patriotic Union of Kurdistan
RGB	Regional Guard Brigades
SANES	Self-Administration of North and East Syria
SDF	Syrian Democratic Forces
SOAG	Special Operations Advisory Group
SOJTF-L	Special Operations Joint Task Force–Levant
START	Syria Transition Assistance Response
UAV	unmanned aerial vehicle
UN	United Nations
UNICEF	UN Children’s Fund
UNSCR	UN Security Council Resolution
USAID	U.S. Agency for International Development
USCENTCOM	The U.S. Central Command
USEUCOM	The U.S. European Command
WASH	water, sanitation, and hygiene
WHO	World Health Organization
WFP	World Food Programme
YPG	People’s Protection Units

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