



# OPERATION INHERENT RESOLVE

LEAD INSPECTOR GENERAL REPORT TO THE UNITED STATES CONGRESS



JULY 1, 2022–SEPTEMBER 30, 2022



## FOREWORD

We are pleased to submit this Lead Inspector General (Lead IG) quarterly report on Operation Inherent Resolve (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 July 1 through September 30, 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**  
Lead Inspector General  
for OIR  
Acting Inspector General  
U.S. Department of Defense



Handwritten signature of Diana Shaw in black ink.

**Diana Shaw**  
Associate Lead Inspector General  
for OIR  
Senior Official Performing the Duties  
of the Inspector General  
U.S. Department of State



Handwritten signature of Nicole L. Angarella in black ink.

**Nicole L. Angarella**  
Acting Deputy Inspector General,  
Performing the Duties of the  
Inspector General  
U.S. Agency for International  
Development

**On the Cover**

(Top row): A U.S. Air Force F-15E Strike Eagle fighter jet conducts a simulated attack run near At Tanf Garrison, Syria (U.S. Army photo); U.S. Army CH-47 Chinook helicopters take off for an OIR mission (U.S. Army photo); a U.S. Air Force C-17A Globemaster III aircraft loadmaster measures the restraints on a U.S. Army M1A2 Abrams Main Battle Tank (U.S. Air Force photo); the SDF conduct an operation to clear suspected ISIS facilitators in the al-Hol displaced persons camp (SDF-press.com photo). (Bottom row): A MQ-9 Reaper UAV at an undisclosed location in support of OIR (U.S. Air Force photo).

## MESSAGE FROM THE LEAD INSPECTOR GENERAL



**Sean W. O'Donnell**

I am pleased to present this Lead IG quarterly report on U.S. Government activities related to Operation Inherent Resolve (OIR) and progress during the quarter toward the U.S. Government's objectives in the region.

Through OIR, U.S. and Coalition forces seek the defeat of ISIS in designated areas of Iraq and Syria. While the frequency and lethality of ISIS attacks in Iraq and Syria remained low compared to previous quarters, ISIS remained an ongoing threat to U.S. interests in the region during the quarter. In July, U.S. forces killed a senior ISIS leader in Syria, Mahir al-Agal, who was also responsible for plotting attacks outside of Iraq and Syria. In August, Syrian partner forces conducted a major operation to clear ISIS operatives from the al-Hol displaced persons camp in northeastern Syria, where persistent ISIS violence and recruitment remains a concern.

U.S. military activity related to OIR focuses on advising and enabling of partner forces as they build their capacity to fight ISIS independently. The stalled Iraqi government formation continued to impact the Iraqi Security Forces, delaying plans to fund more counterterrorism personnel and to establish a joint force with Kurdish Security Forces to conduct operations against ISIS in northern Iraq. The war in Ukraine continued to reduce the availability of parts for Iraqi aircraft. In Syria, Coalition forces continued efforts to grow and strengthen partner forces that are responsible for security at detention facilities holding ISIS fighters and at displaced persons camps, including al-Hol.

Meanwhile, third-party actors continued to undermine the OIR mission. Iran-aligned militias continued to attempt sporadic attacks on U.S. and Coalition facilities in Iraq and Syria, and reportedly, Kuwait. Turkish and Turkish-aligned forces continued military operations in Syria and in Iraq. Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) leaders said that defending against these Turkish operations jeopardizes their ability to concurrently combat ISIS.

The OIR mission to defeat ISIS 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. In Syria, USAID and other organizations expanded water, sanitation, and hygiene activities to address a cholera outbreak. During the quarter, the U.S. Government announced an additional \$756 million in humanitarian assistance, including emergency food assistance, for the Syrian people.

I look forward to continuing to work with my Lead IG colleagues to provide oversight of OIR, as required by the IG Act.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Sean W. O'Donnell".

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





A U.S. Air Force F-15E Strike Eagle fighter jet conducts a simulated attack run near At Tanf Garrison, Syria. (U.S. Army photo)

# CONTENTS

JULY 1, 2022–SEPTEMBER 30, 2022

## **3 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

## **7 MISSION UPDATE**

## **15 IRAQ**

- 16 Security
- 34 Politics and Economics
- 42 Stabilization
- 45 Humanitarian Assistance

## **49 SYRIA**

- 50 Security
- 64 Stabilization
- 69 Humanitarian Assistance

## **73 OVERSIGHT ACTIVITIES**

- 74 Strategic Planning
- 76 Audit, Inspection, and Evaluation Activity
- 80 Investigations and Hotline Activity

## **85 APPENDICES**

- 86 Appendix A:  
Classified Appendix to this Report
- 86 Appendix B:  
About the Lead Inspector General
- 87 Appendix C:  
Methodology for Preparing this Lead IG  
Quarterly Report
- 88 Appendix D:  
Department of Justice Prosecutions and  
Activities Against Terrorism
- 91 Appendix E:  
Department of the Treasury and  
Department of State Actions Against  
Terrorist Financing
- 92 Appendix F:  
Ongoing Oversight Projects
- 93 Appendix G:  
Planned Oversight Projects
- 94 Acronyms
- 95 Endnotes

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







## 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.<sup>1</sup> The broader counter-ISIS campaign includes supporting the Iraqi government and local Syrian partners with civilian-led stabilization activities.<sup>2</sup>

**ISIS continued to wage a low-level insurgency in Iraq and Syria.**<sup>3</sup> Overall, compared with the same period in 2021, the frequency and severity of ISIS-claimed attacks decreased dramatically in Iraq, while attacks in Syria increased significantly, marking a rebound from historically low levels the previous year.<sup>4</sup> ISIS operated in small, rural-based cells, conducting mostly hit-and-run attacks against security forces, and assassinating community leaders.<sup>5</sup> In Iraq, ISIS increased attacks on thermal and surveillance cameras used to disrupt ISIS members' freedom of movement.<sup>6</sup> In Syria, the group claimed attacks on individuals it sees as "spies" in its midst.<sup>7</sup> In July, U.S. forces killed the ISIS leader in Syria Mahir al-Agal, a senior leader in the organization who was responsible for plotting attacks outside of Iraq and Syria.<sup>8</sup>

**The Iraqi Security Forces (ISF) continued to conduct operations against ISIS, often without Coalition support.** Some ISF elements continued to rely on the Coalition to plan intelligence-driven operations and lacked logistics and sustainment capabilities.<sup>9</sup> The stalled Iraqi government formation continued to impact the ISF, including by delaying plans to fund overdue manpower needs for the Counter Terrorism Service (CTS) and to stand up a joint ISF-Kurdish Security Force (KSF) brigade to conduct operations against ISIS in northern Iraq.<sup>10</sup> The war in Ukraine continued to limit the availability of parts and maintenance for Iraqi aviation assets.<sup>11</sup>

**Third parties continued to undermine the OIR mission.** Militias aligned with Iran escalated their attacks on Coalition forces in the region, conducting an attempted cross-border attack against U.S. forces in Syria, and according to militia claims, against U.S. forces in Kuwait using long-range one-way attack unmanned aerial vehicles.<sup>12</sup> In northern Syria, tensions escalated between Turkish and Turkish-aligned forces and the Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF), with deadly exchanges of indirect fire and UAV attacks.<sup>13</sup> SDF leaders said that defending against Turkish operations jeopardizes their ability to conduct counter-ISIS activities and requires the SDF to balance competing priorities of the counter-ISIS campaign and protecting their communities.<sup>14</sup> Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan's threat of a full-scale military incursion did not materialize after he failed to obtain support from Syria's allies Russia and Iran.<sup>15</sup> The hostilities prompted diplomatic negotiations between the Turkish government and the Syrian regime, and also led to increased military cooperation between the SDF and the regime.<sup>16</sup>

## Lead IG Oversight Activities

The Lead IG agencies completed six reports related to OIR during the quarter. These reports examined DoD funding to Vetted Syrian Opposition groups through the Counter-Islamic State of Iraq and Syria Train and Equip Fund; accountability for U.S. Government property at the U.S. Embassy in Baghdad; and management of programs and operations of the U.S. Embassy in Kuwait. As of September 30, 2022, the Lead IG agencies had 8 projects ongoing and 4 projects planned.

During this quarter, investigative branches of the Lead IG agencies and their partner agencies closed 17 investigations, initiated 5 investigations, and coordinated on 72 open investigations. The investigations involve a variety of alleged crimes, including procurement fraud, corruption, grant fraud, theft, program irregularities, computer intrusions, and human trafficking.

Each Lead IG agency maintains its own hotline to receive complaints specific to its agency. During the quarter, the investigator referred 69 cases to Lead IG agencies or other investigative organizations.

**Coalition forces continued to train partner forces in Syria.**<sup>17</sup> Coalition training of the SDF included efforts to grow and professionalize the guard force at detention facilities holding ISIS fighters and security force training for displaced persons camps, including al-Hol.<sup>18</sup> Coalition forces partnered with SDF operations, including using Bradley Fighting Vehicles in joint patrols.<sup>19</sup> Coalition training of the Mughawir al-Thawra (MaT) included dispersion techniques to mitigate the threat from conventional airstrikes and one-way attack UAVs.<sup>20</sup> Coalition forces also provided live-fire base defense training with the MaT, involving the MaT in three exercises in which Coalition forces fired High Mobility Artillery Rocket Systems (HIMARS).<sup>21</sup>

**The SDF conducted a major operation to clear ISIS operatives from the al-Hol displaced persons camp in northeastern Syria, where the group continued to pose “a real threat to the region.”**<sup>22</sup> ISIS continued to exploit the camp to recruit children, using violence to intimidate, indoctrinate, and punish those it viewed as disloyal.<sup>23</sup> During a 24-day clearance operation, the SDF detained approximately 200 operatives; destroyed trenches and tunnels, weapons caches, and a large quantity of killing and torture devices; and demolished dozens of tents used as classrooms to teach ISIS ideology and to conduct court-like proceedings to impose punishments.<sup>24</sup> The SDF also thwarted a large suicide and truck bombing that targeted the camp.<sup>25</sup> During the quarter, 377 individuals departed al-Hol to their home communities in Syria and 754 individuals returned to Iraq; approximately 54,000 people, mostly women and children, remained at the camp.<sup>26</sup>

**State and USAID continued their programs to address food insecurity, restore essential services, and support displaced persons, among other activities.**<sup>27</sup> During the quarter, the U.S. Government announced \$756 million in additional humanitarian assistance, including emergency food assistance, for the Syrian people.<sup>28</sup> In Syria, USAID and other organizations expanded water, sanitation, and hygiene activities to address a cholera outbreak.<sup>29</sup>

Coalition training of the SDF included efforts to grow and professionalize the guard force at detention facilities holding ISIS fighters and security force training for displaced persons camps, including al-Hol.







A MQ-9 Reaper UAV at an undisclosed location in support of OIR. (U.S. Air Force photo)

# MISSION UPDATE

- 8 Introduction
- 9 Progress During the Quarter
- 10 Challenges to the Mission
- 11 Status of ISIS



A U.S. Army Soldier inspects a mortar during a mortar operational rehearsal at At Tanf Garrison, Syria. (U.S. Army photo)

## MISSION UPDATE

### INTRODUCTION

Operation Inherent Resolve (OIR) is a U.S.-led mission implemented by the Global Coalition to Defeat ISIS to advise, assist, and enable local Iraqi and vetted Syrian security forces until they can independently defeat ISIS in designated areas of Iraq and Syria.<sup>30</sup> The mission is executed by the Combined Joint Task Force–Operation Inherent Resolve (CJTF-OIR), which comprises 25 troop-contributing Coalition countries that work with the Iraqi government and vetted local partner forces in both countries.<sup>31</sup> Approximately 2,500 U.S. forces personnel served in Iraq during the quarter, and approximately 900 U.S. forces personnel were in Syria.<sup>32</sup> (See Table 1.)

Table 1.

**U.S. Military Personnel in Iraq and Syria**

	Iraq	Syria
<b>U.S. Military</b>	Approximately 2,500	Approximately 900
<b>DoD Contractor</b>	7,908 (of whom 2,700 are U.S. citizens)	

**Note:** Further information about U.S. forces in Iraq and Syria is available in the classified appendix to this report.

**Source:** ODASD(ME), vetting comment, 10/18/2022.

In addition to military, civilian, and contractor personnel in Iraq and Syria, personnel and institutions support OIR from Kuwait, Qatar, Jordan, and other Middle East countries. CJTF-OIR reported that there were no significant changes to the OIR campaign objectives, the Coalition's membership or cohesion, or the approximate number of military personnel in Iraq and Syria during the quarter.<sup>33</sup>

For FY 2022, Congress appropriated \$7 billion for OIR, a decrease from the \$12.7 billion appropriated for FY 2021. The DoD Comptroller reported that \$3.9 billion of the FY 2022 funds had been disbursed as of the end of August.<sup>34</sup>

U.S. diplomacy, stabilization activities, and humanitarian assistance are integral to the success of OIR.<sup>35</sup> In Iraq, the U.S. Government 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.<sup>36</sup> USAID, the U.S. Government lead for implementing stabilization activities in Iraq, focuses on restoring essential infrastructure; improving social cohesion; helping marginalized and displaced populations return to and rebuild their places of origin; and preventing the resurgence of conflict.<sup>37</sup>

In Syria, the U.S. Government seeks to advance a durable political solution to the Syrian conflict, support humanitarian access, reintegrate displaced persons, preserve ceasefires, promote justice and accountability, and repatriate foreign terrorist fighters.<sup>38</sup>

**PROGRESS DURING THE QUARTER**

In its 2022 Campaign Plan, CJTF-OIR outlined desired end states for OIR and the ways and means to achieve those end states. While the end states are classified, CJTF-OIR said that generally, the conditions it seeks are: ISIS is unable to resurge in Iraq and Syria; the Iraqi Security Forces (including Kurdish forces) are able to independently provide security and stability in Iraq; and eastern Syria is stable and secure.<sup>39</sup>

As detailed in this report, progress toward achieving these conditions during the quarter was limited and incremental. While ISIS continued to be territorially defeated and conducted fewer overall attacks during the quarter compared to a year ago, attacks in Syria rose sharply and the group continues to wage a low-level insurgency in both countries.<sup>40</sup> The Iraqi Security Forces (ISF) continued to conduct counter-ISIS operations but have yet to demonstrate some of the planning, intelligence, command and control, and other skills that

**While ISIS continued to be territorially defeated and conducted fewer overall attacks during the quarter compared to a year ago, attacks in Syria rose sharply and the group continues to wage a low-level insurgency in both countries.**

could be necessary to respond to a complex ISIS attack and independently manage a steady-state, national counterterrorism campaign.<sup>41</sup>

Further information about the OIR campaign plan, desired end states, and progress toward those objectives is available in the classified appendix to this report.

## CHALLENGES TO THE MISSION

Iraq and Syria are complicated environments characterized by armed conflict, political instability, natural disasters, humanitarian crises, and several other concerns that challenge U.S.- and Coalition-supported operations daily. In particular, three persistent challenges affected all aspects of the OIR mission and associated U.S. Government activities during the quarter:

**Third-party Actors:** Several third-party actors exploit instability in Iraq and Syria to expand their influence and secure political or military objectives in the region. While these actors generally oppose ISIS, their activities often contribute to regional instability and undermine U.S. and Coalition forces supporting the OIR mission.<sup>42</sup> The U.S. Central Command (USCENTCOM) continued to view Iran as the greatest threat to regional stability.<sup>43</sup> During the quarter, Iran-aligned militia groups conducted indirect fire and unmanned aerial vehicle (UAV), and IED attacks against U.S., Coalition, and partner forces, while Iran continued to influence Iraqi political groups as they jockeyed for power during the government formation process.<sup>44</sup> In addition, Turkish armed forces conducted military operations in Iraq and in Syria.<sup>45</sup> Russian forces continued to conduct operations in Syria to bolster the government of Syrian President Bashar al-Assad.<sup>46</sup>

**Political Instability:** In Iraq, the stalled government formation process continued to prevent implementation of a federal budget, halting some Coalition-supported institutional reform efforts and ongoing security assistance activities, including the formation of a joint brigade comprising Iraqi Army and Kurdish Security Forces (KSF) units.<sup>47</sup> Iraq held parliamentary elections in October 2021 but the parties continued to be unable to form a government during the quarter. As a result, Iraqi government ministries have continued to operate under the FY 2021 budget, with limited ability to initiate new activities or procure necessary equipment.<sup>48</sup> The political and fiscal stalemate has negatively affected Iraq's security services as well as efforts to rebuild infrastructure, reform the economy, and support internally displaced persons (IDP).<sup>49</sup>

**Social-economic Instability:** In Syria, years of conflict and a collapsed economy have led to widespread displacement of civilians, and drought and the COVID-19 pandemic have increased an already urgent need for international humanitarian assistance, according to the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs.<sup>50</sup> During the quarter, there was a cholera outbreak in Syria.<sup>51</sup> Iraq also faces economic challenges while stabilization efforts are ongoing, threatening political stability and creating environments that allow violent extremist groups to operate.<sup>52</sup>

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

**USCENTCOM**  
continued to  
view Iran as the  
greatest threat  
to regional  
stability.



# STATUS OF ISIS

The DIA reported that while the overall threat that ISIS poses in Iraq and Syria has “diminished greatly” over the past 3 years, the group continued to wage a **low-level insurgency** in Iraq and Syria during the quarter. USCENTCOM said that ISIS **remained resilient** and a threat to the United States and its partners in the region. In particular, the USCENTCOM Commander said that ISIS’s **exploitation of the humanitarian catastrophe at the al-Hol camp** for displaced persons in Syria was “a real threat to the region.”

**Sources:** DIA, response to DoD OIG request for information, 22.4 OIR 008 and 22.4 OIR 012, 9/21/2022; USCENTCOM, press release, “Strike Conducted in Syria,” 7/12/2022; USCENTCOM, press release, “General Michael ‘Erik’ Kurilla on Visiting the al-Hol Camp on Sept. 9,” 9/9/2022.

## ISIS Attack Trends

ISIS claimed 74 attacks in Syria during the quarter—a **sharp increase** from historically low levels in the same period in 2021—and 73 attacks in Iraq.

Small, rural-based cells conducted mostly **hit-and-run style attacks** against security forces with periodic high-profile attacks in urban areas.

ISIS **exploited ethnic and demographic tensions** and intimidated populations with targeted tribal leader assassinations and other coercive measures.

### IRAQ

ISIS exploited **poor interoperability** between security forces, focusing its attacks on the ISF in the rural areas of Anbar, Diyala, Kirkuk, and Salah ad Din provinces.

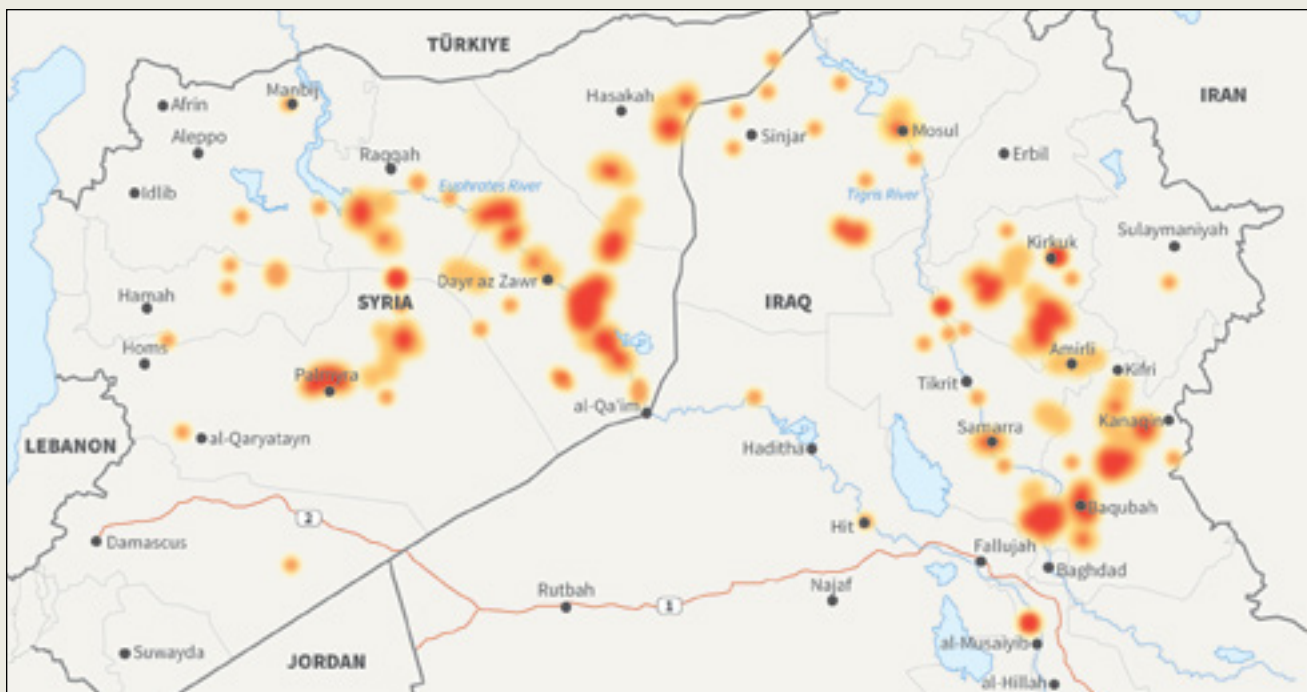
ISIS increased attacks on **thermal and surveillance cameras** used to disrupt freedom of movement by monitoring people avoiding checkpoints.

### SYRIA

ISIS continued to focus its attacks in the sparsely populated areas of Raqqah and Dayr az Zawr governorates, mostly targeting the SDF, while also conducting some **attacks on Syrian regime soldiers**.

Concerned about infiltrators, ISIS claimed to assassinate four “spies” during the quarter—compared with none during the same period in 2021.

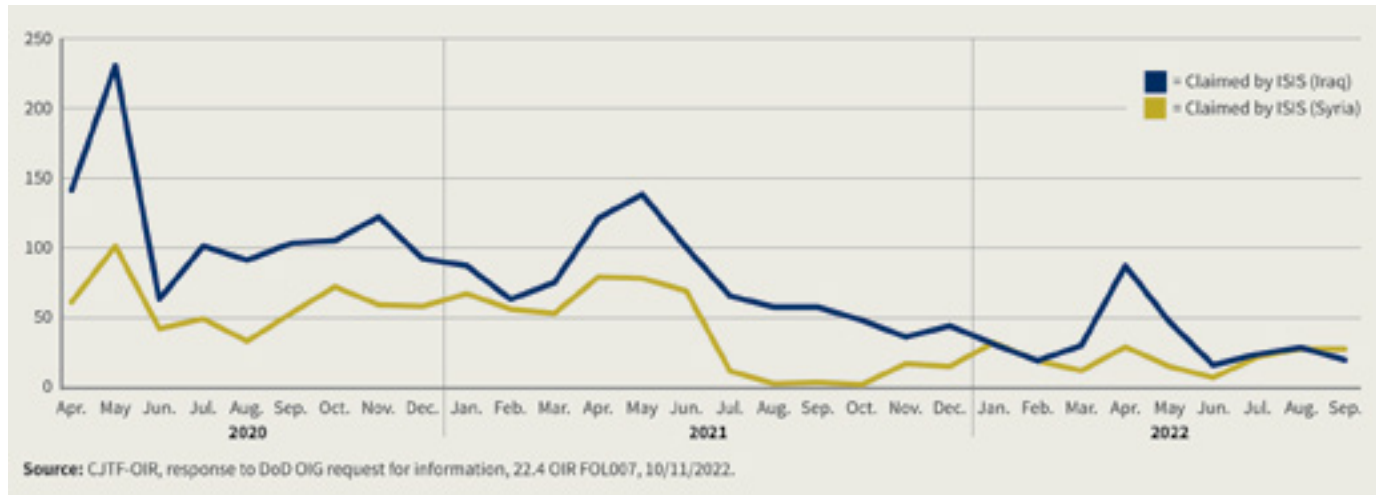
ISIS remained active in the Badiyah desert, **amid limited counter-ISIS activity by pro-regime forces**.



**Sources:** CJTF-OIR, response to DoD OIG request for information, 22.4 OIR FOL007, 10/11/2022; DIA, response to DoD OIG request for information, 22.4 OIR 008, 22.4 OIR 010, and 22.4 OIR 084, 9/21/2022; Janes Terrorism and Insurgency Centre, data for non-state armed group attacks, statements, and actions by Islamic State in Iraq and Syria, 7/1/2022–9/30/2022; Enabling Peace in Iraq Center, “Iraq Security and Humanitarian Monitor,” 6/30/2022–10/6/2022.

*(continues on next page)*

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



### ISIS Capability Assessment

The recent capture and killing of ISIS leaders **degraded some of the group’s attack capabilities temporarily**. The removal in July of Mahir al-Agal deprived ISIS of a capable leader responsible for attack plots outside Iraq and Syria. The capture in June of top ISIS bombmaker and facilitator Hani al-Kurdi likely disrupted bomb plots for several months. However, the January 20 attack on Ghwayran Detention Facility demonstrated that ISIS is **capable of attempting large-scale, complex attacks**.

**STRATEGY AND OBJECTIVES:** ISIS continued seeking to rebuild its organization and **reestablish a viable insurgency** capable of seizing control over the population and territory in Iraq and Syria.

**RECRUITING:** ISIS attempts to reconstitute its forces by **freeing its members in detention centers**. ISIS also sought to recruit susceptible persons at displaced persons camps through intimidation, coercion, and indoctrination. ISIS continued to use al-Hol displaced persons camp in northeastern Syria as a center to **recruit children** and as a **smuggling hub** for its forces and weapons in Syria.

**EXTERNAL OPERATIONS:** ISIS did not claim responsibility for any attacks in the United States or Europe in 2022. ISIS leaders in Iraq and Syria probably remained committed to directing and supporting attacks in Western countries. But the group likely remained **unable to direct attacks against the U.S. homeland**, and continued to encourage small-scale, inspired attacks to demonstrate its reach. Since 2019, ISIS has developed a rudimentary cyber capability that poses a low threat to the United States, such as phishing, but still lacks the capability to conduct complex cyber attacks.

**Sources:** DIA, response to DoD OIG request for information, 22.4 OIR 008, 22.4 OIR 009, 22.4 OIR 011, 22.4 OIR 012 and 22.4 OIR 071, 9/21/2022; CJTF-OIR, response to DoD OIG request for information, 22.4 OIR 014, 9/23/2022.

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

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

ISIS probably had **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.

**Source:** Treasury OIG, response to DoD OIG request for information, 22.4 WOG TREAS 03, 22.4 WOG TREAS 04, and 22.4 WOG TREAS 05, 10/11/2022.

**ORGANIZATION:** ISIS’s largely **decentralized internal structure**—both in Iraq and Syria and elsewhere—enabled its management of operations and finances across the globe. ISIS maintained higher functioning regional networks with hubs in South Asia, East Africa, and the Lake Chad Basin.

**Source:** UN Security Council, “Fifteenth Report of the Secretary-General on the Threat Posed by ISIL (Da’esh) to International Peace and Security,” S/2022/576, 7/26/2022

## 6,000 to 10,000

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

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







A UH-60M Black Hawk helicopter descends for landing during a training flight. (U.S. Army photo)

## IRAQ

- 16 Security
- 34 Politics and Economics
- 42 Stabilization
- 45 Humanitarian Assistance

# IRAQ

In Iraq, the Coalition’s Combined Joint Task Force–Operation Inherent Resolve (CJTF-OIR) operates at the request of the Iraqi government in an advise, assist, and enable role to support Iraqi Security Forces (ISF) and Kurdish Security Forces (KSF) operations to defeat ISIS.<sup>53</sup> In addition, the U.S. Government supports the development of a capable and responsive Iraqi government and a strong Iraqi Kurdistan Region; encourages inclusive economic growth; and supports vulnerable communities as they transition from stabilization to recovery.<sup>54</sup>

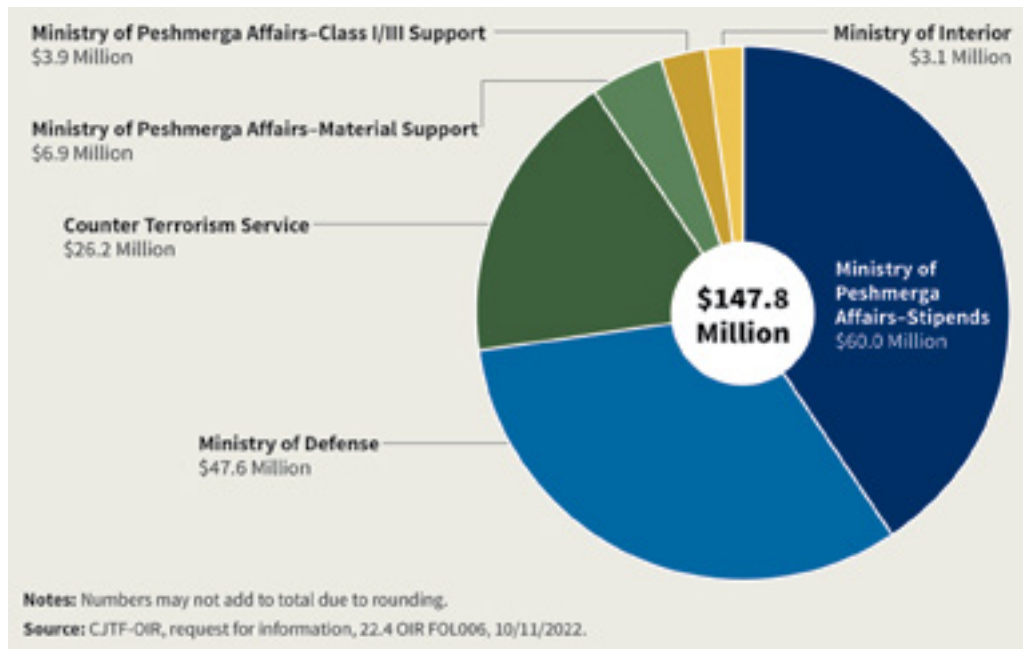
## SECURITY

The U.S. Government and Coalition partners pursue their security objectives in Iraq through several organizations and funding mechanisms. CJTF-OIR has two advisory groups, the Military Advisory Group (MAG) and Special Operations Advisory Group (SOAG), which provide regular advising and assistance to senior ISF and KSF leaders. CJTF-OIR coordinates information and activity with other organizations that provide ministerial-level advising to security forces in Iraq, including the Office of Security Cooperation-Iraq (OSC-I) at the U.S. Embassy in Baghdad, and NATO Mission-Iraq (NMI).<sup>55</sup> (See page 17.)

CJTF-OIR uses the Counter-ISIS Train and Equip Fund (CTEF) as the primary vehicle for providing materiel and other support to Iraqi partner forces. Of the \$500 million CTEF appropriation for FY 2022, \$345 million is designated to support partner forces in Iraq.<sup>56</sup>

Figure 1.

**CTEF-funded Support to Iraq, July–September 2022**



# COALITION ADVISING IN IRAQ

## MAG-KSF Advising

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

## MAG-ISF Advising

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

## Non-OIR Advising and Support

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

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

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

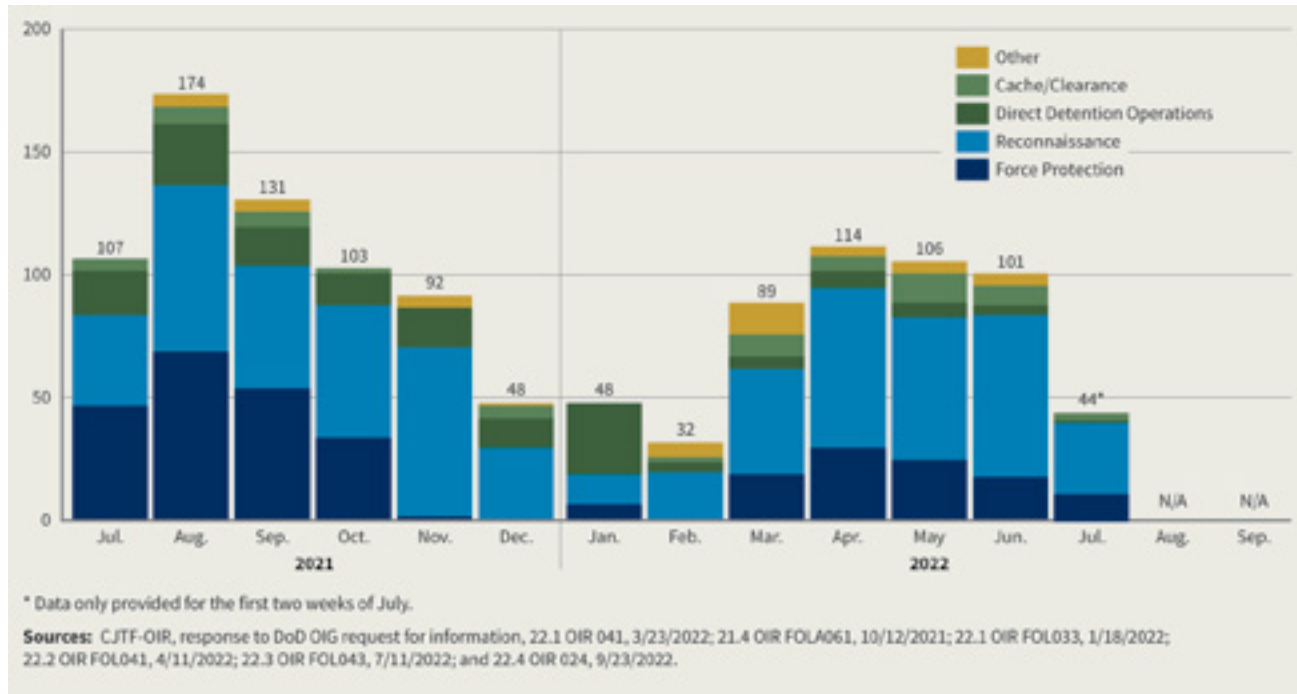


## SOAG-CTS Advising

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

Figure 2.

CTS Operations by Type, July 2021–September 2022



During the quarter, CJTF-OIR used the CTEF to provide \$147.8 million in materiel and support to partner forces in Iraq, bringing the total FY 2022 CTEF support delivered to Iraqi partner forces to \$481.4 million as of the end of the quarter.<sup>57</sup> (See Figure 1.)

In addition, Congress approved \$1 billion for Foreign Military Financing for Iraq (\$250 million annually) between FY 2019 and FY 2022. Once appropriated, the funds are placed in Iraq’s Trust Fund and are available for commitment to specific Foreign Military Sales cases.<sup>58</sup> As of the end of the quarter, nearly \$317 million of FY 2019 and FY 2020 funds had been spent; none of the FY 2021 or FY 2022 funds had been spent.<sup>59</sup>

## OPERATIONS

ISF units continued to conduct counter-ISIS operations during the quarter, often without Coalition assistance.<sup>60</sup> CJTF-OIR reported that the ongoing government formation crisis continued to impact the ISF and KSF ability to conduct operations against ISIS by delaying formation of a joint brigade and limiting the Counter Terrorism Service’s (CTS) ability to increase its manpower.<sup>61</sup> The lack of a new federal budget due to the political impasse has also affected the ability of Iraqi government ministries—including the Ministry of Defense (MoD) and the Ministry of Interior (MoI)—to procure equipment and implement new policies.<sup>62</sup>



## CTS Operations Decrease During Political Unrest

CJTF-OIR reported that the CTS did not provide regular operation summaries during the quarter due to ongoing protests in Iraq, including the parliamentary sit-in and the violence that occurred on August 29 and 30. (See pages 34-35.) The CTS only provided data for the first and second weeks of July, during which the CTS averaged 22 operations per week, slightly below typical weekly averages of 24 to 27 missions. (See Figure 2.) CJTF-OIR reported that the CTS conducted three partnered operations during the quarter.<sup>63</sup>

CJTF-OIR reported last quarter that the CTS was understaffed, with only 43 percent of its authorized personnel strength.<sup>64</sup> CJTF-OIR said that the Iraqi government intends to fund CTS force generation efforts without Coalition support and has earmarked funds for the cause. However, these efforts are on hold due to the stalled government formation and subsequent lack of a federal budget.<sup>65</sup>

CJTF-OIR assessed that the CTS maintains moderate proficiency conducting operations against ISIS independently; yet with Coalition support, the CTS are frequently effective.<sup>66</sup>

While the CTS frequently detains individuals during operations, the conviction rate has been historically low, between 20 and 25 percent.<sup>67</sup> However, during the quarter eight trials of individuals detained by the CTS all resulted in convictions. In the previous quarter five of six individuals detained were convicted.<sup>68</sup> Coalition legal advisors have advised the CTS on methods to improve sensitive site exploitation techniques to avoid contamination and compromise of evidence.<sup>69</sup>

## CTS, with Coalition Support, Expands Partnerships with Other ISF Units

CJTF-OIR encourages the CTS to coordinate and partner with other units—such as the MoD, the KSF, and other ISF components as well as Coalition forces—in order to deconflict and maximize the effectiveness of operations. The CTS coordinated with external units during the quarter, but typically does not report cooperation outside of partnered kinetic or warranted operations.<sup>70</sup>

In one example of coordination during the quarter, the CTS worked with the Federal Intelligence and Investigations Administration (FIIA), which is part of the MoI. CJTF-OIR said that the FIIA identified and located the ISIS target, and the CTS provided the tactical force. This operation led to friction over who would secure and exploit the captured enemy material.<sup>71</sup> During the quarter, the SOAG provided partnered advisory assistance to the FIIA.<sup>72</sup>

The CTS also coordinated with the ISF during two named operations during the quarter.<sup>73</sup> CJTF-OIR assessed that the JOC-I is not always willing to coordinate and integrate activity independent of Coalition support or encouragement. For example, during planning conferences for phases five, six, and seven of a wide-ranging ISF clearance operation called Operation Willing Resolve, the JOC-I did not independently plan to include the CTS. CJTF-OIR said that the MAG and SOAG are concerned that if the JOC-I and the CTS do not coordinate regularly on counter-ISIS operations, unilateral operations from either entity in similar areas may conflict, especially when based on time-sensitive intelligence of enemy activity.<sup>74</sup>

**The CTS also coordinated with the ISF during two named operations during the quarter.**

Coalition advisors who work with the JOC-I and the CTS often work together and share intelligence to discuss potential enemy targets. CJTF-OIR said that this has resulted in ISF airstrikes that are followed by joint CTS-ISF ground forces conducting post-strike clearances of target areas.<sup>75</sup>

Coalition advisors also seek to improve the ISF's ability to coordinate and direct airstrikes independently by encouraging coordination between Iraqi Tactical Air Controllers (ITAC) and ISF air liaison officers. Two air liaison officers sit in the MAG Strike Cell during ISF airstrikes and have increasingly been involved with crucial communication to Iraqi pilots. In addition, Coalition advisors to the ISF and CTS work closely with the JOC-I which oversees execution of close air support or precision airstrikes.<sup>76</sup> CJTF-OIR reported that ITAC training accelerated during the quarter, to include training of operators from the CTS and KSF. SOAG-trained ITACs within the CTS began directing strikes by ISF aircraft during operations last quarter.<sup>77</sup>

During the quarter, the ISF executed four additional phases of Operation Willing Resolve, an ongoing counter-ISIS operation that began in February.

## Coalition Continues to Support ISF Operational Planning and Sustainment Capability

During the quarter, the ISF executed four additional phases of Operation Willing Resolve, an ongoing counter-ISIS operation that began in February. CJTF-OIR described them as search and clearance operations and said that two of the operations were executed jointly with KSF.<sup>78</sup> Operation Willing Resolve paused in mid-September. CJTF-OIR said the ISF will likely resume the operation once there is progress in government formation.<sup>79</sup>

During Operation Willing Resolve, Coalition advisors advised ISF leaders at the JOC-I across several “warfighting functions,” including operations and planning, command and control, intelligence, fires, logistics and sustainment, and information operations. CJTF-OIR provided current assessments of the ISF's capability in these functional areas.<sup>80</sup> Those assessments are available in the classified appendix to this report.<sup>81</sup>

**Planning:** CJTF-OIR reported that while ISF's intelligence capability is one of its best and most developed capabilities, one major shortcoming is the ISF's ability to use a cross-functional and intelligence-driven planning process.<sup>82</sup> Typically, the JOC-I relies on intelligence to pinpoint an area, refines orders to plan with unit commanders and the advice of the MAG, and then disseminates orders subordinate units to implement the plan.<sup>83</sup> MAG operations advisors also attend planning conferences and provide advice on courses of action.<sup>84</sup>

During the quarter, the MAG developed a campaign plan proposal for future Iraqi operations against ISIS, including operations to deny ISIS freedom of movement along the Kurdistan Coordination Line, an area that divides the Iraqi Kurdistan Region from the rest of Iraq and is claimed by both Iraq's central government and the Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG).<sup>85</sup>

CJTF-OIR said that the JOC-I improved some aspects of the planning process during the quarter, including working with MAG advisors earlier in the process and narrowing operational areas of focus, but continued to reject recommendations to incorporate artillery into ground operations, instead continuing to rely solely on air strikes.<sup>86</sup>



**KSF drivers depart from the forward logistics element yard. (U.S. Army photo)**

**Logistics and Sustainment:** A second major shortcoming is the ISF’s limited capability to maintain adequate logistics and sustainment. In particular, CJTF-OIR noted a lack of spare parts and components, limited maintenance capability, and a limited Recognized Logistics Picture, a tool used by the U.S. military to identify available resources and make timely decisions related to procurement and other sustainment requirements.<sup>87</sup>

CJTF-OIR reported that Coalition sustainment advisors meet with JOC-I counterparts, but that the Iraqi sustainment directorate remains focused on obtaining materiel from the Coalition rather than participating in the planning or conducting of operations.<sup>88</sup> The MAG has suggested adding logistics officers to the directorate but the JOC-I leadership has not followed through with this suggestion.<sup>89</sup>

CJTF-OIR said that it does not have accurate information about Iraqi sustainment capability at the tactical level due to the lack of OIR advisors positioned with Iraqi logistics and sustainment personnel. CJTF-OIR assessed that the ISF is able to sustain operations that last 12 to 24 hours.<sup>90</sup> CJTF-OIR noted that the low operational tempo and short duration of operations against ISIS means that the ISF is able to sustain limited duration operations.<sup>91</sup>

**Command and Control:** The JOC-I headquarters in Baghdad functions as a center for search and clearance and other operations against ISIS, and responds to incidents of public safety concern—such as protests and civil unrest, and pilgrimages that attract millions of visitors to Iraq.<sup>92</sup> For other operations, the JOC-I delegates command and control to the subordinate Operation Commands that are located in many Iraqi provinces.<sup>93</sup>

During the quarter, the Coalition’s command and control advisors took steps to improve the JOC-I’s “common operational picture,” which provides battlefield situational awareness, including by distributing additional SHOUT Nano devices, which are pocket-sized, self-contained satellite trackers, and Harris radios. The SHOUT Nano devices, if used properly by subordinate units, will provide the JOC-I real-time locational tracking of ISF units. The MAG trained operational commanders on how to use the devices and associated Google Earth Pro software.<sup>94</sup>

## End-Use Monitoring in Iraq

OSC-I continued to conduct enhanced end-use monitoring inventories at locations in Iraq during the quarter. State reported that in August, DoD OIG auditors accompanied the end-use monitoring officer to four locations to conduct inventories of night-vision devices, Stinger missiles, and M1A1 tanks located in the International Zone and at Camp Taji.<sup>95</sup>

Though OSC-I and the embassy's Regional Security Office have made significant strides in increasing areas of access through site surveys, it still has limited access to most areas in Iraq due to the security situation. OSC-I expanded its ability to conduct end-use monitoring by receiving approval from the Defense Security Cooperation Agency to allow host-nation self-reporting of night-vision devices. Each quarter the MoD, MoI, and CTS gather serialized inventories from their respected units and submit reports that are used by the end-use monitoring officer's staff.<sup>96</sup> Since all ISF units were deployed except for one battalion unit that is in training, inventories of night-vision devices were limited to the one unit in training. OSC-I conducted physical security checks of storage facilities for tanks and Stinger missiles at storage sites.<sup>97</sup>

State reported it is not aware of any reports of units that received U.S. equipment and training having committed human rights violations during the quarter. State said it adheres to the Leahy Law and Foreign Assistance Act and would take the required remedial actions if an Iraqi unit were found to have committed a human rights violation.<sup>98</sup>

## AIR OPERATIONS AND FIRE SUPPORT

### ISF Airstrike Capability Makes Incremental Progress

CJTF-OIR reported that the ISF conducted 28 airstrikes on ISIS targets during the quarter, an increase from the previous quarter.<sup>99</sup> (See Figure 3.) The ISF continued to rely primarily on its F-16 and A/C-208 platforms. In August, the ISF conducted a strike utilizing their L-159 light attack aircraft, the first in 4 months.<sup>100</sup>

CJTF-OIR said that the most critical shortcoming in Iraqi Air Force's strike execution continued to be its ability to generate airstrike supporting products (such as imagery and selecting munitions) and guiding ISF aircraft to hit designated targets. CJTF-OIR explained that the variances seen in the timing and quality of products delivered to the pilots, in addition to the lack of a codified strike standard at the JOC-I, results in pilots having to be excessively flexible when executing a strike while airborne. CJTF-OIR said that this sometimes results in less than optimal outcomes for the strike.<sup>101</sup>

CJTF-OIR reported that Iraqi airstrike success rates this quarter were mixed, with not enough data provided to know if successes were tied to individual pilots, missions, or employment platforms (such as Iraqi F-16s).<sup>102</sup>

Of note, CJTF-OIR reported post-strike ground operations over this period were timely and consistent.<sup>103</sup> CJTF-OIR said that following strikes on caves where ISIS operatives were assessed to be hiding, ISF ground forces conducted clearances in the cave systems, which

became a multi-day effort due to enemy contact. The ISF showed a strong willingness to maintain security of targeted ISIS cave systems between airstrikes and were proficient in resourcing and transporting the necessary engineering equipment to dig out the collapsed cave entrances to obtain captured enemy material before sealing the caves permanently.<sup>104</sup> The MAG recommended that the ISF pre-position ground forces to decrease response time and train ground forces to better conduct onsite forensics to decrease contamination of captured enemy material.<sup>105</sup>

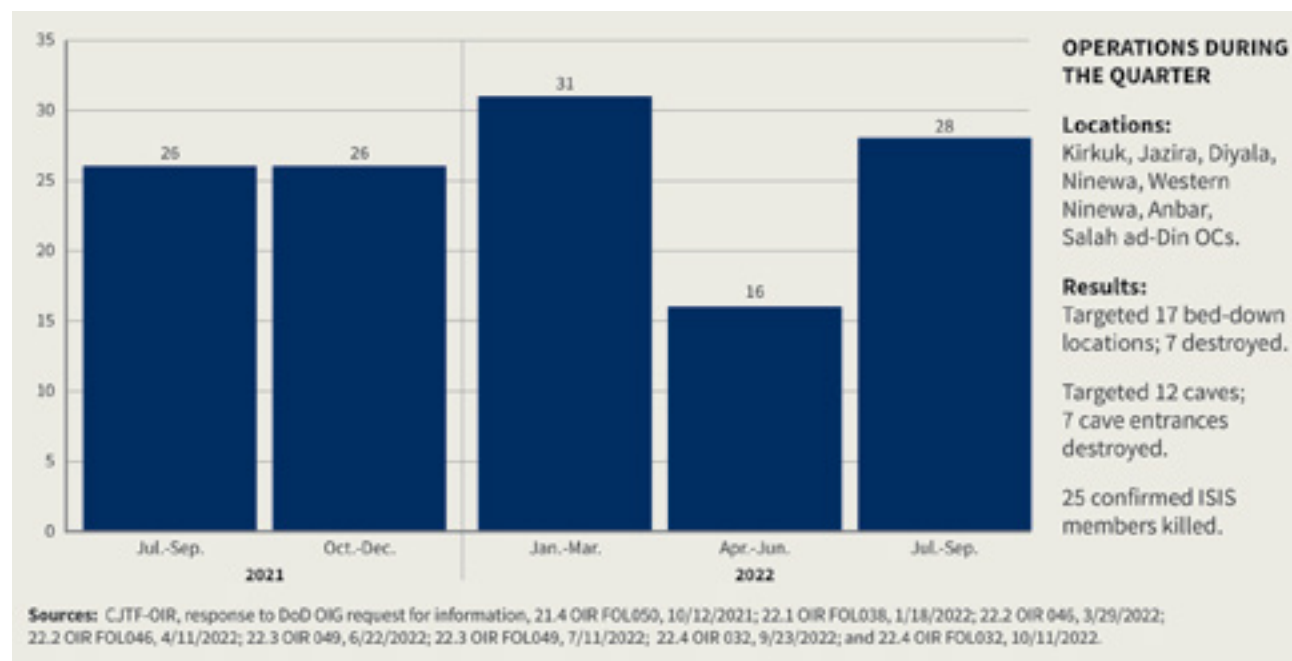
### Communication Obstacles and Target Designation Remain Challenges for ISF Airstrikes

CJTF-OIR reported that the JOC-I Targeting and Strike Cells continued to make progress towards a more autonomous deliberate targeting process and that it made incremental successes—hitting eight out of nine targets this quarter. However, the lack of sufficient personnel continues to hinder the effectiveness of the JOC-I Strike Cell and impedes the JOC-I’s ability to achieve progress towards a more tactical or dynamic targeting cycle.<sup>106</sup>

**Planning and Execution:** While CJTF-OIR stated that the JOC-I is gaining proficiency in generating target packages with the support of Coalition advisors, it is still heavily reliant on Coalition ISR assets to support precision airstrikes.<sup>107</sup> The MAG advisors continued to enable the JOC-I through ISR observation, laser handoff, and terminal guidance. CJTF-OIR said that in general, Iraqi pilots lack confidence in laser designating targets for another pilot’s precision munitions, so the Coalition provided terminal guidance through Coalition

Figure 3.

#### Counter-ISIS Airstrikes by Iraqi Aircraft, July 2022-September 2022



Lt. Gen. Alexis G. Grynkeiwich, Ninth Air Force (Air Forces Central) commander, tours an Iraqi Air Force hangar with Iraqi Air Force members and leadership, Baghdad, Iraq. (U.S. Air Force photo)



ISR assets on nearly all F-16 strikes to achieve accurate precision fires. The Strike Cell is implementing standard operating procedures, products, and formalizing relationships to enable the ISF to rely on their own organic targeting assets in the future and drive greater JOC-I involvement.<sup>108</sup>

A key element towards enabling independent ISF airstrikes is by directly incorporating ISF ITACs and Iraqi Air Liaison Officers (IALOs) into the strike process.<sup>109</sup> However, the communications relay between the IALOs at the JOC-I and ISF strike aircraft presents an additional challenge for the airstrike process. According to CJTF-OIR, any communications between an IALO and an Iraqi aircraft must be coordinated between the IALOs via telephone to a supporting element, then personnel operating the supporting element repeats the communication via radio to the Iraqi strike aircraft in English (per international standards). CJTF-OIR said that as with the “telephone” game, the messages can sometimes be misinterpreted or confused, particularly when the users’ primary language is not English. CJTF-OIR reported this is the best technical solution available for the Iraqis at this time.<sup>110</sup>

Senior Iraqi leaders continued to seek counsel from Coalition advisors and, in most cases, were receptive to feedback. However, CJTF-OIR reported that ISF leaders’ decision to strike targets are often influenced by extraneous factors, including: retaliatory strikes in response to ISF casualties, competition between intelligence agencies, and a lack of tactical patience.<sup>111</sup>

**Intelligence Integration:** The JOC-I has increased focused on incorporating Iraqi ISR assets where appropriate, CJTF-OIR said. Although still constrained by maintenance limitations, the ISF continued to use various unmanned platforms, including the Chinese-made CH-4 and U.S.-made Scan Eagle. The ISF integrated these platforms into planning and used them as appropriate for strike operations.<sup>112</sup>

However, CJTF-OIR said that the Targeting Cell is not connected to the JOC-I planning directorate's planning process and mostly works isolated from the JOC-I staff. As a result, tasks to shape the enemy and provide updated intelligence to the ground forces are neither prepared nor properly performed. CJTF-OIR added that the JOC-I intelligence section's role is reduced to arranging for an ISR asset to be on station during an operation, with little forewarning.<sup>113</sup>

**Command and Control:** Coalition advisors recently adopted a comprehensive training and advisement plan to address current shortcomings in ISF target development and command and control. The MAG Strike Cell Director engaged with JOC-I leadership to debrief airstrike command and control and normalize the timeline and product delivery prior to strikes. CJTF-OIR said that the F-16 air advisor from the Coalition's Air Enterprise Development Cell initiated a minimum 2.5-hour planning and execution timeline for targets, however it has not yet been officially adopted by JOC-I leadership. In addition, Joint Terminal Attack Controllers from the United States trained two ISF Captains in target product development and strike execution management.<sup>114</sup>

**Sustainment:** CJTF-OIR remained concerned about the overall logistics support effort for air operations, particularly ISF platforms that lack maintenance contracts. In addition, Iraqi fuel delivery was inconsistent during the quarter.<sup>115</sup> Balad Air Base was a particular point of focus for fuel deliveries with the transition from contractor to Iraqi control and management at the end of August through early September.<sup>116</sup>

## War in Ukraine Degrades ISF Aircraft Availability

The war in Ukraine continued to have a detrimental impact on the ISF's ability to maintain its aircraft. CJTF-OIR reported that, like last quarter, the war and international sanctions continued to undermine the ISF's ability to support four Russian-designed airframes within the Iraqi Air Force and Iraqi Army Aviation Command (IqAAC).<sup>117</sup> Part scarcity remained a primary concern for the ISF's Russian-designed aircraft and the Czech-produced L-159s and is expected to reduce availability of these aircraft for the duration of the Ukraine conflict.<sup>118</sup>

The U.S. Central Command (USCENTCOM) reported that the IqAAC's Russian-made Mi-17 medium lift helicopters and Mi-35 and Mi-28 attack helicopters lack spare and replacement parts due to the war in Ukraine. As a result, readiness rates will continue to decline as parts on hand rapidly diminish.<sup>119</sup> CJTF-OIR said that the Mi-17 witnessed the most significant decrease in mission capability rate considering its capability to support the ISF's offensive and defensive requirements.<sup>120</sup>

The availability, materiel readiness, and capabilities across the entire ISF's helicopter fleet remained steady compared to the previous quarter. CJTF-OIR pointed to continuing deficiencies, including a lack of maintenance process and spare parts, which resulted in reduced aircraft availability and in turn, decreased pilot proficiency.<sup>121</sup>

CJTF-OIR noted that Coalition sustainment advisors do not have visibility on the ISF's aviation fleet readiness reports, as the JOC-I logistics section does not consolidate this information.<sup>122</sup> USCENTCOM reported that OSC-I also does not maintain nor collect data on the operational readiness of ISF aircraft.<sup>123</sup>

**USCENTCOM reported that the IqAAC's Russian-made Mi-17 medium lift helicopters and Mi-35 and Mi-28 attack helicopters lack spare and replacement parts due to the war in Ukraine.**

The Iraqi government did not make any requests to OSC-I during the quarter to support ISF equipment needs concerning Ukrainian or Russian equipment and maintenance support.<sup>124</sup> However, OSC-I is in discussion with the Iraqi MoD to convert the entire IqAAC fleet to aircraft sourced from the U.S. manufacturer Bell Textron in order to simplify parts acquisition, maintenance, and training.<sup>125</sup>

### ISF Helicopters Not Available for CTS Training

Last quarter, CJTF-OIR reported that the ISF demonstrated initiative in attempting to make IqAAC helicopters available to the CTS for air assaults.<sup>126</sup> However, this quarter the CTS did not conduct any air assault or helicopter assault force operations, with the last one conducted in June 2022. CJTF-OIR noted that the FIIA conducted an air movement to a staging area using IqAAC helicopters as part of a larger ISF clearance operation in August. However, the IqAAC aircraft were not used in a traditional helicopter assault force to transport the FIIA force onto an objective.<sup>127</sup>

The CTS conducted unit-level hostage rescue team training in August 23 that included fast roping from a IqAAC Mi-17 medium lift helicopter. CJTF-OIR said that the Combat Readiness and Preparedness Inspections that the CTS conducts would normally include a full mission profile helicopter assault force evaluation, to include evaluations of rappelling and fast roping, that are subject to IqAAC helicopter availability. However, IqAAC helicopters were not available during the quarter to conduct this training.<sup>128</sup> CJTF-OIR stated that the SOAG does not have visibility on wider air assault development because Iraqi helicopter assets fall under the IqAAC rather than CTS or FIIA.<sup>129</sup>

### Coalition Advisors Continue to Encourage ISF to Utilize Artillery in Operations

CJTF-OIR reported that despite continued MAG advisement, the ISF typically does not incorporate indirect fire support from mortars and artillery into operational planning. Additionally, the ISF's indirect fire support functions remain absent within the JOC-I. As in previous quarters, CJTF-OIR said that the JOC-I leadership continued to lack confidence in the accuracy of ISF artillery even if the artillery directorate affirms Iraqi systems are in good condition and training levels are satisfactory. Until very recently, information released by the ISF operations commands through the JOC-I had not reported any use of artillery or other indirect fire assets during deliberate operations against ISIS since October 2021. Instead, the JOC-I solely relies on the Iraqi Air Force or IqAAC airstrikes to hit targets. This quarter however, the ISF reported to CJTF-OIR that it increased the use of mortars at the tactical level.<sup>130</sup>

Coalition advisors continued to develop a comprehensive proposal to bring more fire support content into the JOC-I's operational planning. CJTF-OIR hopes that ultimately an Iraqi artillery officer will be positioned within the JOC-I to support operations planning. However, because Coalition advisors are not aligned below the operational level or with units responsible for organizing, training, and equipping indirect fire missions, CJTF-OIR could not describe any steps being taken to improve the maintenance or training of the ISF's indirect fire systems.<sup>131</sup>

**The Iraqi government did not make any requests to OSC-I during the quarter to support ISF equipment needs concerning Ukrainian or Russian equipment and maintenance support.**



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## INFORMATION OPERATIONS

### New Information Operations Center Seeks to Counter Enemy Propaganda and Disinformation

CJTF-OIR said that it has devoted “considerable effort” to improve the ISF’s ability to independently conduct information operations.<sup>132</sup> A major part of this effort has been training. During the quarter, Coalition advisors trained ISF and KSF personnel from eight security organizations to carry out information operations and to understand the importance of competing in the information environment.<sup>133</sup>

The training courses covered such topics as cyber security techniques and using open sources to monitor adversary propaganda. Trainees learned to create online messages using non-attributable means, developed the skills to produce quality media statements, and attended workshops and seminars on areas such as countering propaganda, influencing friendly, neutral, and adversarial target audiences, and deterring adversaries from attacking Iraqi or Coalition forces.<sup>134</sup> Coalition advisors worked with the Iraqi Security Media Cell to produce weekly videos, social media posts, and a weekly JOC-I newsletter called *The Joint*.<sup>135</sup>

CJTF-OIR advising on information operations also includes the provision of information technology equipment to the JOC-I to equip the new Joint Information Operations Center (JIOC), a permanent facility in Baghdad for the ISF and KSF information operations activities.<sup>136</sup>

CJTF-OIR began its efforts to institutionalize ISF information operations through the JIOC in February 2022 due to the inability of the Iraqi government and security forces “to match the scope, speed, and scale of its adversaries in the information environment.”<sup>137</sup> Since then, Coalition advisors have trained 101 students in a 5-day basic information operations course. A portion of those were chosen to complete a 5-day advanced course.<sup>138</sup>

In July, CJTF-OIR transferred management of the JIOC to the ISF. In August, ISF personnel began training their colleagues on information operations for the first time, while Coalition staff shifted to advising only. However, as of the end of August, the JIOC was only “partially operational” because only 17 personnel had been assigned to work there. CJTF-OIR said that KSF leadership has not agreed to allow Kurdish members to work at the joint center.<sup>139</sup> Other units did not transfer their trained personnel to the JIOC due to their own manning constraints.<sup>140</sup> CJTF-OIR said the center was able to challenge adversary propaganda and allow the ISF to “directly compete against adversaries that official security media outlets are unable to address.”<sup>141</sup>

CJTF-OIR said that fully manning the JIOC is “vitaly important” to comprehensively monitoring the information environment.<sup>142</sup> It said that how effective the center becomes will depend on the “quality of the operators and their ability to collaborate at speed to counter adversarial information operations.”<sup>143</sup>

## KURDISH SECURITY FORCES

### KSF Operations Continue Against ISIS, but Joint Brigade Remains Stalled

CJTF-OIR reported that the KSF conducted 7,000 operations against ISIS along the Kurdistan Coordination Line (KCL) during the quarter, including reconnaissance missions, ambushes, and patrols.<sup>144</sup> The 70s and 80s Units, forces aligned with the Iraqi Kurdistan Region’s two largest political parties, carried out clearance operations along the KCL without the Ministry of Peshmerga Affairs (MoPA) involvement, CJTF-OIR said.<sup>145</sup>

In addition, KSF special operations forces conducted 19 operations partnered with ISF or Coalition forces, CJTF-OIR said.<sup>146</sup> According to local media, the KSF forces arrested 17 ISIS members accused of planning to assassinate Kurdish military leaders and a religious official.<sup>147</sup>

CJTF-OIR reported that ISIS continued to use an area along the KCL, which runs from Iraq’s border with Syria to its border with Iran and divides the Iraqi Kurdistan Region from the rest of Iraq, to stow supplies and plan attacks.<sup>148</sup> In September, KRG President Nechirvan Barzani said that ISIS remains a “serious threat” to Iraq, according to local media reports.<sup>149</sup>

The KSF also coordinated two operations against ISIS with the ISF. CJTF-OIR described them as “simultaneous search and clearance operations” that were coordinated following conferences between the KSF and the JOC-I in Baghdad.<sup>150</sup> In addition, the ISF’s Border Guards and KSF’s 1st Special Forces Gulan Division conducted joint patrols to secure the Iraqi Kurdistan Region’s border with Syria and deter potential ISIS cross-border movement.<sup>151</sup>

According to media reports, Iraqi Prime Minister al-Kadhimi and KRG Prime Minister Masrour Barzani reiterated during a July meeting their support for security coordination in areas along the KCL.<sup>152</sup> Also in July, senior military officials approved preliminary measures for intelligence sharing between ISF and KSF forces, media reports said.<sup>153</sup>

However, plans for an ISF-KSF Joint Brigade continued to stall due to lack of funding for the Iraqi Army unit that will make up the ISF half of the brigade. The funding deficit is the result of delays in the formation of Iraq’s new government following the October 2021 elections.<sup>154</sup>

### KSF Capable of Unilateral Missions Against ISIS but Rely on Coalition for Complex Operations

CJTF-OIR reported that KSF units are capable of conducting successful unilateral counterterrorism operations against ISIS without Coalition support, including identifying targets using their own intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance capabilities.<sup>155</sup> The KSF is also capable of planning, directing, and synchronizing activities while integrating warfighting functions, and of conducting tactical-level operations against ISIS, both unilaterally and jointly with ISF or Coalition forces.<sup>156</sup>

CJTF-OIR reported that the KSF conducted 7,000 operations against ISIS along the Kurdistan Coordination Line (KCL) during the quarter, including reconnaissance missions, ambushes, and patrols.

**In September, the United States renewed a memorandum of understanding with the KRG to support reform measures being undertaken by the MoPA.**

However, the KSF continued to show an “immature intelligence-driven operational planning process,” CJTF-OIR said.<sup>157</sup> Overall, the KSF remains dependent on the Coalition to conduct sustainable and independent complex operations against ISIS.<sup>158</sup>

In addition, the KSF maintains artillery units that participate in operations against ISIS along the KCL. While one unit in Sulaymaniyah province has demonstrated “dry fire” training proficiency, KSF units have not trained with live fire due to ammunition shortages.<sup>159</sup> Another unit demonstrated basic knowledge of how to operate an artillery system, but lacked the necessary experience to conduct indirect fire. CJTF-OIR reported that to address these issues, the MAG was developing certification criteria and distributing ammunition for training.<sup>160</sup>

CJTF-OIR said that the KSF also has a “nascent capability” to plan and execute joint operations with the ISF, but the capability is limited to basic battlespace deconfliction and coordination of operations.<sup>161</sup> Additionally, the effectiveness of KSF clearance operations south of the KCL is limited by their inability to hold ground, which leaves areas along the KCL vulnerable to ISIS’s reoccupation.<sup>162</sup>

## **U.S. Renews Memorandum on Peshmerga Reform**

In September, the United States renewed a memorandum of understanding with the KRG to support reform measures being undertaken by the MoPA.<sup>163</sup> The non-binding agreement, which serves as an organizing framework for DoD counter-ISIS support to the MoPA since 2016 and encourages continued MOPA reform, will last for 4 years subject to the availability of funds.<sup>164</sup>

CJTF-OIR reported that the MoPA continued to transfer personnel from the 80s and 70s Units to the MoPA’s Regional Guard Brigades, a process formally known as Peshmerga Unification.<sup>165</sup> During the quarter, the MoPA created the 21st and 22nd RGBs, transferring 1,478 personnel to the 21st brigade.

As of the end of the quarter, the KSF under the MoPA comprised 20 RGBs of roughly 2,000 soldiers each, the 1st and 2nd Support Force Commands, with roughly 5,500 personnel each, two Sinjar infantry battalions of approximately 400 personnel each, and training centers in Kirkuk, Duhok, and Sulaymaniyah.<sup>166</sup> The total MoPA personnel strength is 48,200.<sup>167</sup> The target force is 60,000 regular personnel and 30,000 to 40,000 reserve personnel.<sup>168</sup> During the quarter, the United States continued to pay the stipends of vetted MoPA personnel.<sup>169</sup>

## **OPERATING ENVIRONMENT**

### **Iran-aligned Militias Escalate Attacks Outside of Iraq**

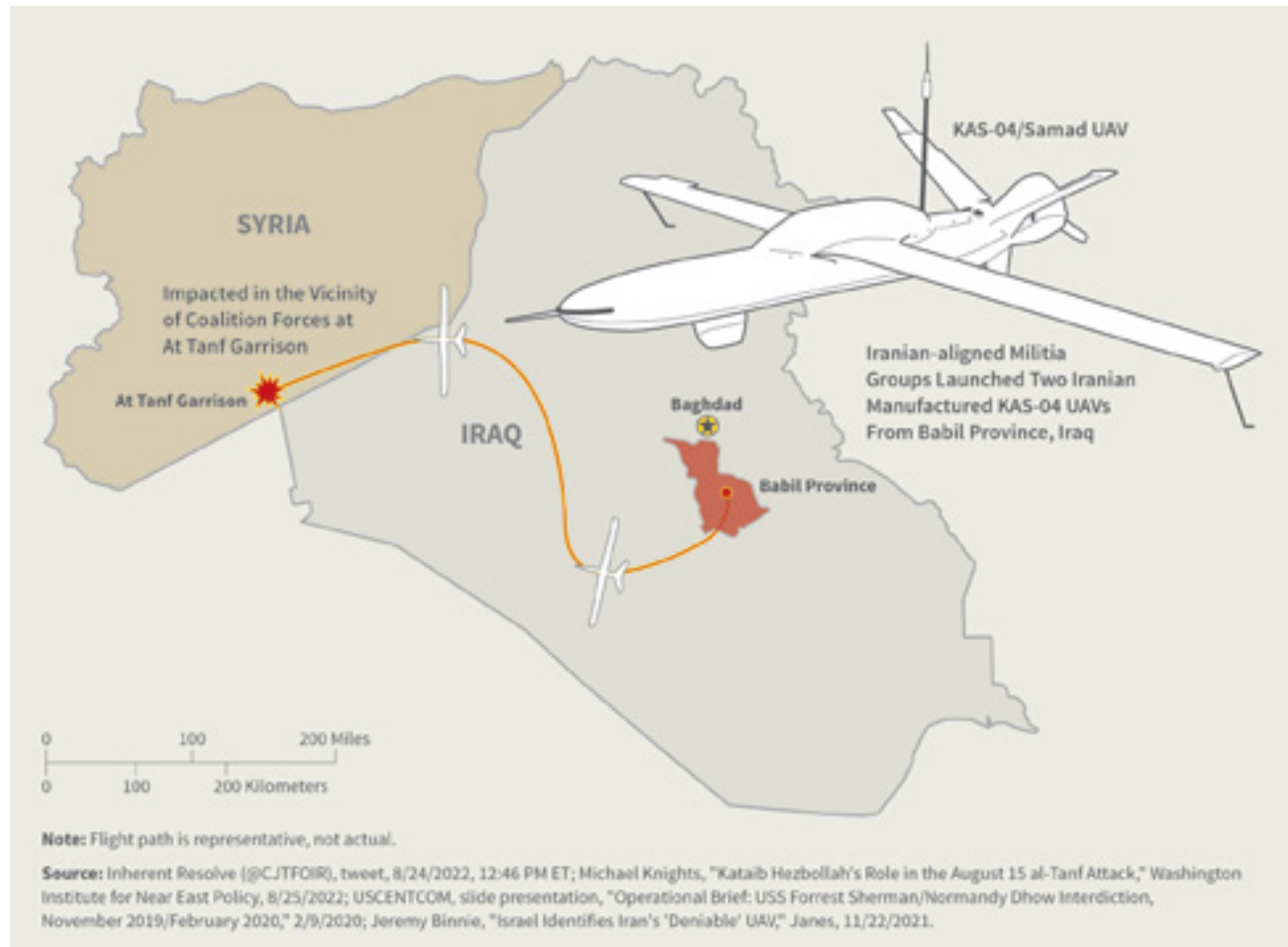
Iraqi Shia militias aligned with Iran did not conduct any unmanned aerial vehicle (UAV) or rocket attacks against U.S. or Coalition personnel operating in Iraq during the quarter, according to the Defense Intelligence Agency (DIA) and CJTF-OIR.<sup>170</sup> However, militias conducted at least seven attacks on Coalition forces in Syria, up from one attack in the previous quarter.<sup>171</sup>

The DIA said that despite the lull in attacks against U.S. and Coalition personnel in Iraq, the militias based in Iraq may have conducted two additional attacks against U.S. forces in the region: a UAV attack on U.S. forces positioned at At Tanf Garrison in Syria on August 15 and another attempted UAV attack that targeted U.S. forces at Ali al-Salem Airbase in Kuwait. The attempted attack on Ali al-Salem Airbase did not impact in the vicinity of the base.<sup>172</sup>

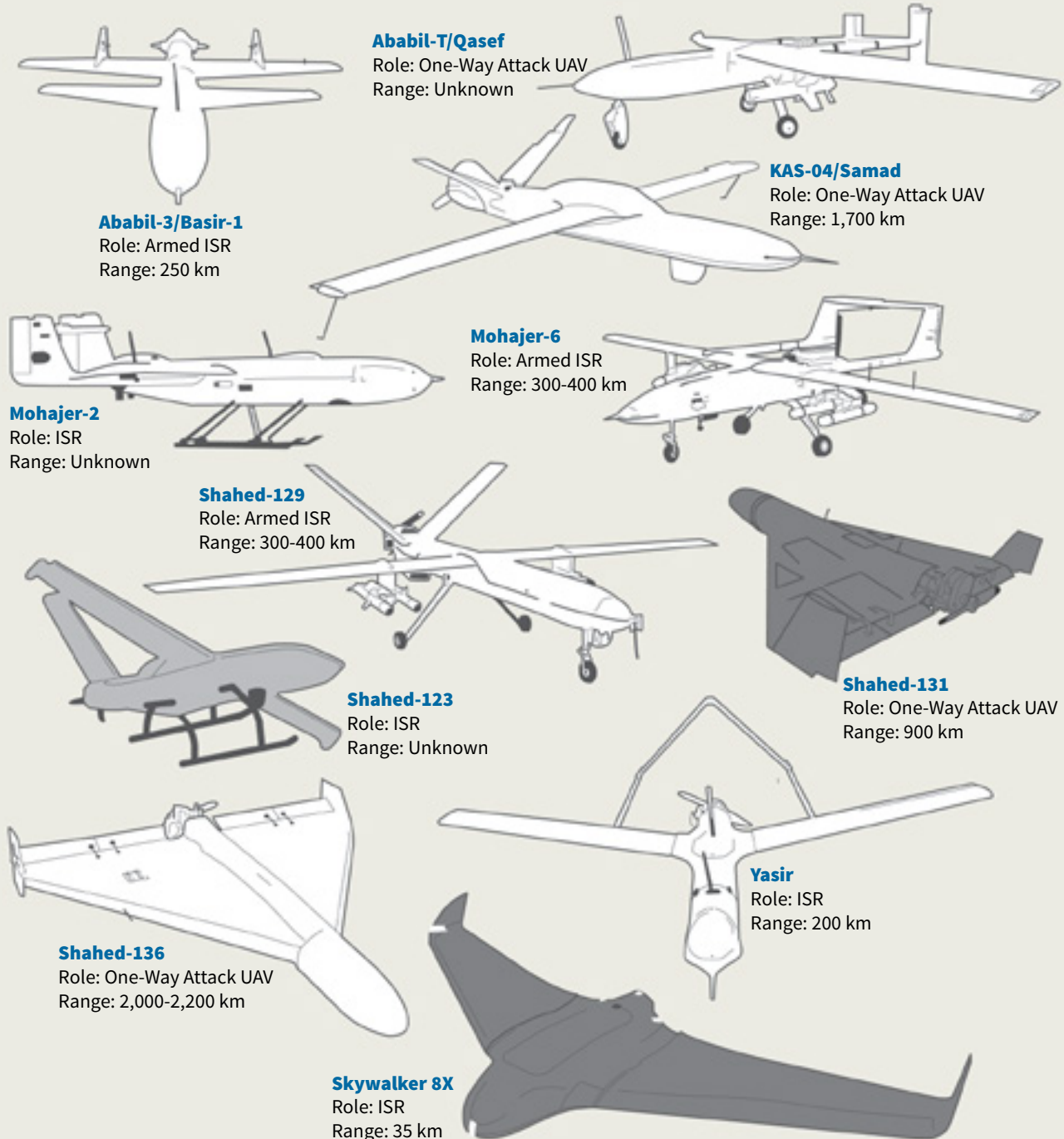
CJTF-OIR assessed that Iran-aligned militias conducted the August 15 attack on At Tanf, based on an analysis of the recovered UAV parts from the attack.<sup>173</sup> The attack resulted in no casualties or damage, which CJTF-OIR credited to robust countermeasures in place to protect Coalition and Mughawir al-Thawra (MaT) partner forces.<sup>174</sup> CJTF-OIR said that two Iranian-produced KAS-04 one-way attack UAVs were launched from Babil province in Iraq, in the first cross-border attack on a Coalition facility in Syria.<sup>175</sup> (See Figure 4.) On the same day, multiple rounds of indirect fire landed in the vicinity of Mission Support Site (MSS) Green Village in northeastern Syria.<sup>176</sup>

Figure 4.

#### August 15 UAV Attack on At Tanf Garrison



# IRANIAN-PRODUCED UAVS COMMONLY USED BY IRAN AND IRAN-ALIGNED MILITIAS IN THE REGION



Sources: See Endnotes on page 104.

According to a Washington-based research organization, within days of the At Tanf attack, Iran-aligned militias claimed to have attempted to attack Ali al-Salem Airbase in Kuwait from within Iraq, but the UAV crashed in Dhi Qar province before it could reach the Kuwaiti border.<sup>177</sup> The same analysis, citing open source imagery, identified the UAV as a probable Iranian-produced Qasef-2K one-way attack UAV, a design known to also be used by the Iran-backed Houthis in Yemen.<sup>178</sup>

On August 23, in response to the two attacks, the United States exercised what CJTF-OIR described as self-defense airstrikes targeting the Ayash ammunition bunkers in Dayr az Zawr governorate in Syria that were operated by militia groups affiliated with Iran's Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps.<sup>179</sup> Later that day, Iran-aligned militias in Syria responded to the U.S. strike by targeting MSS Green Village again and also targeting MSS Conoco with indirect fire.<sup>180</sup> According to a USCENTCOM press release, at least three U.S. Service members received minor injuries during the attack on MSS Conoco.<sup>181</sup> U.S. forces conducted additional self-defense strikes against the Iran-affiliated militants in the area, destroying ten rocket launchers and killing four militants associated with the attacks.<sup>182</sup>

On September 18, another attack in Syria occurred when three 107mm rockets targeted MSS Green Village.<sup>183</sup> Days later, Iran launched a series of ballistic missile and UAV attacks on Kurdish targets in northern Iraq.<sup>184</sup> USCENTCOM announced on September 28 that during the attacks, U.S. forces downed an Iranian Mohajer-6 UAV that was heading towards Erbil, Iraq and appeared to threaten U.S. forces in the area.<sup>185</sup> CJTF-OIR stated that while no U.S. or Coalition casualties occurred, dozens of people within Erbil province were killed or injured as result of indirect fire.<sup>186</sup> Iranian officials claimed to launch at least 73 surface-to-surface missiles targeting Kurdish anti-Iranian regime opposition groups' bases in Iraq that they alleged were used to plan anti-regime protests in Iran.<sup>187</sup>

CJTF-OIR said that Iran-aligned militias' attacks on Coalition forces complicated some aspects of the Coalition's efforts to counter ISIS during the quarter.<sup>188</sup> In addition to the UAV and rocket attacks that targeted Coalition facilities in the region, CJTF-OIR reported six IED attacks against U.S. and Coalition interests in Iraq.<sup>189</sup> CJTF-OIR assessed that the continued IED attacks were likely conducted by Iran-aligned militias to disrupt logistics and damage materiel being transported in support of counter-ISIS operations.<sup>190</sup> Press reporting also indicated that an IED targeted an Australian diplomatic vehicle on a road leading to Baghdad's International Zone on August 26, however no group claimed responsibility.<sup>191</sup> The DIA noted again that the militias have also messaged an intent to target U.S. aircraft with anti-aircraft weaponry, including man-portable air defense systems (commonly referred to as MANPADS), and maintain the capability to escalate their attacks using more sophisticated weapons.<sup>192</sup>

The DIA also reported that during the quarter, front groups affiliated with Iran-aligned militias, including Ahrar al-Iraq, Saraya Awliya al-Dam, and Saraya Ababil, conducted at least six attacks against Turkish interests in northern Iraq, including the Turkish consulate in Mosul.<sup>193</sup>

**On August 23, in response to the two attacks, the United States exercised what CJTF-OIR described as self-defense airstrikes targeting the Ayash ammunition bunkers in Dayr az Zawr governorate.**

## U.S. Embassy Baghdad Faces Security, Staffing Challenges

Mission Iraq—which includes the U.S. Embassy in Baghdad, the Baghdad Diplomatic Support Center, and the Consulate General in Erbil—continued to operate during the quarter under an in-country staffing cap for certain U.S. direct hire employees, third-country national direct-hires, visitors, and assigned personnel. As a result, the embassy had to continuously coordinate all arrivals and departures and could not easily bring additional personnel into Iraq on short notice.<sup>194</sup>

Meanwhile, the average monthly number of visitors to the U.S. Embassy in Baghdad increased since an ordered departure was lifted in July. State said that while the end of the ordered departure facilitated more diplomatic engagement and advancement of mission priorities, the increased numbers of visitors has made it increasingly difficult to manage the staffing cap.<sup>195</sup>

Because there has been no change in staffing levels since the lifting of the ordered departure, Mission Iraq has continued to focus on priority functions.<sup>196</sup> State's Office of Management Staffing and Solutions has started the congressionally mandated Overseas Presence Review that will take into consideration Mission Iraq's ongoing staff review.<sup>197</sup>

### EMBASSY COMPOUND REPAIRS MOVE AHEAD, ALBEIT SLOWLY

State reported that repairs to damage at one of the Embassy's Common Access Control Facilities caused by an attack in December 2019, reached a level of substantial completion on September 30. Obtaining this milestone will allow the embassy to reopen the facility later in the year. State also awarded a contract for the design of other damaged embassy compound facilities on September 19. The embassy requested that State prioritize the replacement of another Common Access Control Facility rather than include it in a larger project that may take years to complete.<sup>198</sup>

State reported that it met other construction milestones at the New Consulate Compound in Erbil during the quarter, including the fire pump start-up and underground flushing and start of finish work in the Consulate Office Building.<sup>199</sup> The biggest risks to completing the projects on schedule include incorporating new Diplomatic Security requirements, continued challenges with global supply chain and shipping delays, and current economic and security conditions in the northern Iraqi region.<sup>200</sup>

### SECURITY THREATS KEEP MISSION IRAQ ON ALERT

CJTF-OIR reported that during the widespread civil unrest and intra-Shia violence in Iraq on August 29 and 30, the International Zone was impacted by multiple rounds of indirect fire near U.S. and Coalition facilities. CJTF-OIR assessed that the U.S. and Coalition forces were not the intended target of the indirect fire; however C-RAM air defense systems at the U.S. Embassy compound successfully engaged direct rocket tracks that night. A partially hit rocket did impact the compound causing superficial damage to an unoccupied facility, but there were no injuries.<sup>201</sup>

According to press reports citing Iranian, U.S. military, and Iraqi Kurdish sources, Iran fired missiles and drones toward Sulaymaniyah and Erbil September 28.<sup>202</sup> The KRG told a media

*(continued on next page)*

## U.S. Embassy Baghdad Faces Security, Staffing Challenges

*(continued from previous page)*

outlet that 13 people died and 53 were injured in the attacks. The primary target of the attacks appeared to be the bases of parties of Iranian Kurds opposed to the Iranian regime.<sup>203</sup>

State reported that the primary security threats to the greater Baghdad area stem from the stalled government formation process. Large and occasionally violent demonstrations occur with little advance warning to timing and location. Though the overall number of indirect fire and UAV attacks has trended downward compared to 2021, the Embassy said it cannot rule out the possibility of opportunistic violence against American interests involving these hazards.<sup>204</sup> The primary threat to the U.S. Consulate General in Erbil remains attack UAVs and to a lesser extent, both direct fire and indirect fire systems.<sup>205</sup>

## POLITICS AND ECONOMICS

The U.S. Government, through State, coordinates diplomacy and public diplomacy programs to support Iraq's stability and enable reconstruction. State said that this engagement is necessary to combat malign foreign influence, particularly from Iran. The U.S. Government also supports Iraqi efforts to ensure a more responsive government and reduce corruption; foster private sector-led economic growth and job creation; and strengthen civil society groups so that they can operate freely.<sup>206</sup>

### GOVERNANCE

Iraq has been unable to form a new government since the October 2021 elections, leaving the country to operate under a caretaker government that can only carry out existing policies. During the quarter, the caretaker government continued to operate under the FY 2021 budget, though the Iraqi parliament was able to approve the \$17.1 billion emergency food security law. (See page 47.) All other government programs and humanitarian aid initiatives were on hold until a new government is formed, and a budget is approved by the parliament.<sup>207</sup>

On October 13, after a year of political deadlock, the Iraqi parliament elected Abdul Latif Rashid as President of Iraq. President Rashid had the backing of the Iran-aligned Shia Coordination Framework. Within days, the new president designated Mohammed Shia al-Sudani to be Prime Minister. The Prime Minister-designate will have 30 days to form a new government with the backing of the Shia Coordination Framework.<sup>208</sup> According to State, unidentified militias fired at least nine rockets toward the Iraqi parliament, but that did not delay the vote.<sup>209</sup>

### Stalled Government Formation Leads to Street Protests

The continuing inability of Iraq's political parties to agree on a new government sparked renewed street demonstrations during the quarter. In late July, demonstrators aligned with Shia cleric Muqtada al-Sadr, who last quarter directed parliament members from his political party to resign, twice took over the parliament building in the International Zone, resulting in suspension of meetings of the Iraqi parliament for 2 months.<sup>210</sup>



On August 23, Sadrists shifted their focus to stage a sit-in at the Supreme Judicial Council in Baghdad, demanding, without success, that parliament be dissolved to pave the way for new elections. The Federal Supreme Court said that the parliament must dissolve itself.<sup>211</sup>

On August 29, al-Sadr's declared that he was resigning from politics, prompting some of his followers to occupy the Prime Minister's Office. The ISF conducted a limited response, using tear gas and batons, to regain control of the Prime Minister's Office. The DIA reported that as the protesters retreated, they were fired upon by forces likely from the Popular Mobilization Committee (PMC), the Iraqi government institution that administers the Popular Mobilization Forces that is linked to Shia Coordination Framework. The ISF sought to protect protesters from the probable PMC fire while otherwise remaining on the sidelines. Subsequently, the Sadrist militias sought to reinforce and defend the embattled protesters.<sup>212</sup>

The clashes in Baghdad continued for approximately 24 hours, leading to more than 30 deaths and hundreds of wounded. Countrywide, security incidents occurred in at least 11 of Iraq's 19 provinces, but clashes outside of Baghdad did not reach the level of violence that occurred within the Baghdad International Zone.<sup>213</sup>

On August 30, al-Sadr ordered an end to the protests, resulting in the withdrawal of Sadrist militias from the International Zone. According to the DIA, low-level, sporadic political violence continued throughout southern Iraq through the end of the quarter.<sup>214</sup>

Iraqi Prime Minister al-Kadhimi almost certainly refrained from targeting Shia militias to avoid risking further violence during the tenuous government formation.<sup>215</sup>

Al-Sadr supporters also launched protests in southern Iraq, focusing their tough rhetoric on the Popular Mobilization Forces and Asa'ib Ahl Al-Haq. Following the August 29 and 30 protests, hundreds of demonstrators, chanting slogans, marched in Baghdad reminding observers of the protests by the anti-establishment demonstrations that started in October 2019, according to media reports. The demonstrators denounced Iraq's political establishment and Iranian influence in Iraqi politics.<sup>216</sup>

**USAID reported that due to violence and heightened tensions during the quarter, several USAID partners temporarily halted staff movements and activities in and around Baghdad.**

USAID reported that due to violence and heightened tensions during the quarter, several USAID partners temporarily halted staff movements and activities in and around Baghdad.<sup>217</sup> Furthermore, a USAID NGO partner reported that the annual Aba'een religious pilgrimage in Iraq caused road closures, an increased presence of security forces, and significant population movement through parts of central and southern Iraq.<sup>218</sup> As a result, the NGO stopped all staff movements between and within affected governorates from September 9 to 18, and postponed some program activities, especially in Shia areas.<sup>219</sup>

Additional information about developments in Iraq's government formation process can be found in the classified appendix to this report.

## Citing Corruption, Iraq's Finance Minister Abruptly Resigns

According to news reports, Finance Minister Ali Abdul-Amir Allawi resigned on August 16 after he alleged corruption schemes involving some of his fellow ministers.<sup>220</sup> In his resignation letter, Allawi described a “vast octopus of corruption and deceit,” and said that the state had been “effectively captured by political parties and special-interest groups.”<sup>221</sup>

State said that Allawi's resignation would unlikely have any material impact on the White Paper for Economic Reforms, a project spearheaded by Allawi and approved by Iraq's cabinet in October 2020.<sup>222</sup> Allawi, an MIT- and Harvard-trained hedge fund manager and development expert, was viewed in the West as a strong voice against Iraqi corruption, according to media reports.<sup>223</sup>

## U.S. Government Continues Support to Iraqi Counter-Corruption Efforts

In August, the U.S. Ambassador to Iraq met with the Governor of the Central Bank of Iraq to discuss Iraqi efforts to combat money laundering and terrorist financing. State reported that the U.S. Government, through the Treasury Department (Treasury) and the Federal Reserve Bank of New York, regularly engages with the Central Bank of Iraq to discuss Iraqi banking and regulatory reforms, deficiencies in Iraq's ability to address money laundering and terrorism financing, and compliance with U.S.-imposed sanctions on individuals and entities accused of supporting terrorism.<sup>224</sup>

The U.S. government supports the Central Bank of Iraq's efforts to address deficiencies related to combating money laundering and terrorist financing. Treasury and the Federal Reserve Bank of New York engage with the central bank's leadership on reforms related to banking infrastructure, anti-money laundering, and combatting terrorist financing. The U.S. government regularly engages via Embassy Baghdad on these issues through the Treasury Attaché.<sup>225</sup> In January 2021, State's Bureau of Economic and Business Affairs awarded \$500,000 to a U.S.-based NGO to provide the Iraqi Ministry of Finance with technical training over a 2-year period on budget administration and transparency best practices. During the quarter, the NGO developed budget guidelines, procedures, and tools to strengthen budget processes with the ministry.<sup>226</sup> Since the beginning of 2022, Iraqi prosecutors secured guilty verdicts in 591 corruption cases, representing 36 percent of the total cases submitted by the Commission of Integrity. One minister and 18 senior civil servants were among those convicted.<sup>227</sup> The court sentencing results ranged from suspended sentences and fines to sentences of 5 years or more.<sup>228</sup>

In late August, OSC-I sent 12 senior MoD officials to a 2-week conference in Washington, D.C., to improve the officials' understanding of strategic planning and capacity building; the budget and the coordination mechanism with Parliament on increasing the budget of the MoD; raising the capabilities of training institutions in the ministry (training civilians and military personnel); empowering women and enhancing their role in the military establishment; fighting corruption and building integrity in the defense sector; contract

According to news reports, Finance Minister Ali Abdul-Amir Allawi resigned on August 16 after he alleged corruption schemes involving some of his fellow ministers.

program management under the Foreign Military Sales program; and implementation of the 5-year plans of the MoD. State reported that the conference was a success, receiving better feedback than in previous years.<sup>229</sup>

### **Kurdish Authorities Detain Journalists, Members of Parliament in Advance of Demonstrations**

Protests erupted in August in the Iraqi Kurdistan Region following calls by Shaswar Abdulwahid, the leader of the opposition Next Generation Movement party, to protest what he called the government's disregard of people's basic rights.<sup>230</sup> State said that in the days prior to the demonstrations, Kurdish authorities had detained journalists and opposition members and supporters, some without charges, while they attempted to interview people about the upcoming protest.<sup>231</sup>

News outlets reported that Kurdish authorities arrested 21 additional journalists and closed a Duhok-based news outlet on the day of the demonstrations, which attracted hundreds of people to the streets. Media outlets controlled by the major Kurdish political parties did not cover the demonstrations.<sup>232</sup> State reported that the KSF fired tear gas and rubber-coated bullets to disperse protesters in some areas, while in other places the demonstrations occurred without incident.<sup>233</sup> All members of the KRG parliament, opposition supporters, and journalists who were detained during the days leading up to the protests were released by August 7.<sup>234</sup>

State said it consistently raises the importance of freedom of expression with KRG officials and that staff from the Consulate General in Erbil consistently offer to meet with journalists who have been detained. According to State, the consulate plans to partner with the KRG to provide training to government officials and journalists on the press law, including journalist registration requirements under the law, to reduce restrictions on press freedom.<sup>235</sup>

### **August 8 Statement From the U.S. Embassy in Baghdad on the Kurdish Response to Protests:**

"We are concerned by reports of the use of tear gas and rubber-coated bullets to disperse protesters and the detention of journalists, civil society activists, and members of parliament in the Iraqi Kurdistan Region...in the run up to and during protests held in Sulaimaniyah on August 6. For democracy to succeed, governments must safeguard constitutionally protected and universal human rights and freedoms, including freedom of peaceful assembly and demonstration, freedom of expression, the right to a fair trial with due process, and the right of journalists to do their jobs freely and without interference. We urge [Independent Kurdistan Region] authorities to review these actions and reaffirm the vital roles that a free press, peaceful assembly, and the rule of law play in democracy."<sup>236</sup>

## BUDGET AND ECONOMY

### Stalled Government Formation Impedes Economic Reform, Infrastructure and Public Services Spending

The inability of Iraqi politicians to form a new government has prevented Iraq from initiating critical economic reforms, spending on much-needed infrastructure, and improving the delivery of public services, among other economic necessities.<sup>237</sup>

Under current law, the Ministry of Finance is authorized to allocate one-twelfth of the 2021 budget each month to the ministries, plus allocations permitted under the supplemental 2022 “Emergency Support for Food Security and Development” law. While Iraq has benefited from the rise in oil prices and other market changes resulting from Russia’s invasion of Ukraine, the Iraqi government cannot by law invest its surplus oil revenues to improve state services or modernize outdated infrastructure and is struggling to meet some contractual obligations. As a result, the Iraqi government could not initiate new projects or sign new contracts during the quarter.<sup>238</sup>

State reported that the Iraqi government and the KRG made no progress during the quarter in reaching an agreement on the distribution of funds from the annual federal budget and the transfer of crude oil from the KRG to Iraqi’s oil marketer.<sup>239</sup> The KRG continued to export oil independently and benefited from the global increase in oil prices, although sales were made at a significant per-barrel discount due to the perception of legal risk among buyers. The Iraqi government did not transfer funds to the KRG during the quarter as an advance payment against the not-yet-approved 2022 federal budget. Earlier this year, the Iraqi government made three advance payments of \$137 million each to pay civil servant salaries; the last payment was made in May.<sup>240</sup>

### Climate Change Continues to Worsen Conditions

A report prepared for the UN International Organization for Migration (IOM) released in August said that Iraq has been determined by the UN Environment Programme’s 2018 sixth Global Environment Outlook to be the world’s fifth-most vulnerable country to climate change, citing soaring temperatures, insufficient and diminishing rainfall, intensified droughts and water scarcity, and frequent sand and dust storms. The report said that “climate migration” has already taken place in Iraq, with the IOM having recorded about 20,000 people displaced by water scarcity, high salinity, and poor water quality. The report attributed the water crisis to various causes, including rapid population growth, urbanization, and inefficient water use by the agricultural and industrial sectors.<sup>241</sup>

To address the water scarcity problem, the U.S. Government supported a visit by a group of 26 Iraqi engineers and officials to the United States to learn from the Bureau of Reclamation and the U.S. Geological Survey’s experience in adapting to water scarcity and implementing best practices.<sup>242</sup>

The United States also funded the travel of Iraqi engineers and managers who participated in an international technical seminar and study tour in the United States on evaluating the safety of dams. The training aims to enhance Iraq’s ability to safely maximize water storage at its dams.<sup>243</sup>

Additionally, USAID supplied software and computers to help the Ministry of Water Resources produce complex water usage models to improve management. USAID supported Iraq’s 2030 “Vision for Sustainable Development” to help Iraq improve water resource planning to better manage future crises.<sup>244</sup>

State reported that the Ministry of Environment has developed a long-term plan for investments in infrastructure improvements, including water infrastructure. However, the ongoing formation of Iraq’s next government and the lack of a federal budget continued to be barriers to securing funding for these plans.<sup>245</sup>

The United States has provided a \$1 million grant for a number of climate research efforts conducted by universities in Iraq’s southern provinces, supporting Iraqi efforts to raise public awareness of the impacts of climate change, and assisting the Iraqi government in developing a 5-year climate strategy to improve forecast communication to farmers and eliminate crop and soil damage.<sup>246</sup>

### Oil Revenues Drop for the Quarter but Still Produce Surplus

The price per barrel and average daily revenues from Iraq’s oil exports dropped during the quarter.<sup>247</sup> Daily revenues for September fell below \$300 million for the first time since January 2022. (See Figure 5.) However, the difference between the projected and actual

Figure 5.

Actual vs. Projected Daily Oil Revenue, in \$ Millions, July 2021–September 2022



average daily revenues continued to produce a significant budget surplus. Due to the stalled government formation and lack of a 2022 federal budget, the Iraqi government is unable to spend the surplus.<sup>248</sup>

## Iraq Ratchets Up Pressure to Enforce Court Ruling Nullifying KRG Oil and Gas Law

Tensions between the Iraqi government and the KRG remained high during the quarter in the wake of the Federal Supreme Court's February 2022 ruling confirming the Iraqi government's exclusive authority over the management of oil and gas throughout Iraq, including the Iraqi Kurdistan Region. The KRG relies on oil revenues for the majority of its budget; while the Iraqi government insists on its right to regulate foreign trade. Since the court's decision, the KRG has rejected the federal court ruling and continued to produce and sell its oil in the same quantity as before the decision.<sup>249</sup> The KRG has been using a section of the Kirkuk-Ceyhan pipeline located in Türkiye to export crude oil from the Iraqi Kurdistan Region since 2014. International arbitration, initiated by the Iraqi government alleging that the KRG's use of the pipeline violates a 1973 agreement governing its use, remains underway.<sup>250</sup>

In order to force the KRG to comply with the court ruling, the Ministry of Oil initiated litigation at the Karkh Commercial Court of Baghdad against nine international oil companies operating in the Iraqi Kurdistan Region. On July 4, the court ruled that the KRG's contracts with four oil companies were invalid. To increase pressure, the Basrah Oil Company sent letters to oilfield service companies with operations in both regions threatening to "blacklist" them from Basrah Oil Company projects unless they vowed to wind down operations in the Iraqi Kurdistan Region.<sup>251</sup>

The United States has focused on helping to mitigate the impacts of the Federal Supreme Court's decision on U.S. firms, and on calming global energy markets and fostering Iraqi stability. State said it has encouraged Iraqi government and KRG officials to seek third-party mediation.<sup>252</sup> One media source, citing a senior State official, reported that the U.S. Government is concerned that implementation of the court's decision would create an economic crisis with broad repercussions.<sup>253</sup> As part of this process, State pressed the Iraqi government to ensure that U.S. energy companies, which are among the international energy companies affected by the dispute, are equitably treated, consistent with the rule of law.<sup>254</sup>

## REGIONAL DIPLOMACY

### Iraq Continues Diplomatic Outreach

Prime Minister al-Kadhimi attended the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) + Egypt, Jordan, and Iraq summit with the United States in Jeddah, Saudi Arabia, on July 16.<sup>255</sup> At the summit, the leaders of the GCC member states affirmed their joint commitment to preserve regional security and stability and affirmed their support for ensuring the Arab Gulf region is free from all weapons of mass destruction, underscoring diplomatic efforts to prevent Iran from developing nuclear weapons.<sup>256</sup> According to State, Iraq signed electrical

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interconnection agreements with the GCC and with Jordan and Egypt to provide 500 megawatts of power from Saudi Arabia to the southern Iraqi power grid in 1 to 2 years.<sup>257</sup>

On August 22, the prime minister attended a summit hosted by Egyptian President Abdel Fattah al-Sisi that also included leaders from Jordan, the United Arab Emirates, and Bahrain. The purpose of the summit was to discuss mutual relations, economic cooperation, and regional security challenges.<sup>258</sup>

In support of the U.S. commitment to increase trade and investment in Iraq, the U.S. Ambassador to Iraq hosted diplomats from 11 embassies and international organizations at the U.S. Embassy in Baghdad. Following the meeting, the U.S. Embassy issued a statement in support of Iraq's economic reform and a strong private business sector to create more Iraqi jobs and investment opportunities.<sup>259</sup>

## Turkish-PKK Conflict Causes Civilian Deaths in Iraqi Kurdistan Region

During the quarter, the Turkish military continued military action in northern Iraq directed at the Kurdistan Workers Party (PKK), a U.S.-designated terrorist organization based in northern Iraq that has waged a decades-long armed insurgency against the Turkish government.<sup>260</sup> State's Integrated Country Strategy for Iraq noted the importance of Iraq being able to "project" its sovereignty; State said that it "supports coordinated efforts to remove [the PKK] from Iraq" in the context of commenting on the PKK's presence in the country.<sup>261</sup> A prominent journalist observed that Iraq did not have the power to forcibly eject either Turkish troops or the PKK from its soil.<sup>262</sup>

CJTF-OIR reported that the JOC-I leadership focused more on Turkish military activity in northern Iraq during the quarter and allocated funds for 3,200 new border guards in northern Iraq to address Turkish-PKK violence; deployment of the guards was delayed due to the stalled government formation.<sup>263</sup> The JOC-I also closely monitored Turkish violations of Iraqi airspace.<sup>264</sup> CJTF-OIR said that the new effort to monitor Turkish actions "slightly" impacted the rhythm of counter-ISIS operations conducted by the ISF and the KSF.<sup>265</sup> In addition, DIA noted that the PKK and KSF exchanged gunfire in July after PKK members tried to enter the Iraqi Kurdistan Region from Syria.<sup>266</sup>

A nongovernmental organization asserted that the Turkish practice of attacking vehicles after they entered towns, rather than in the more isolated areas they had just left, caused civilian casualties.<sup>267</sup>

On July 20, in an incident that attracted wide attention—and outrage—9 Iraqi tourists were killed and 33 injured in what was reported to be an artillery attack on a tourist resort in Dohuk province. The Iraqi government and the PKK attributed the attack to Turkish armed forces.<sup>268</sup> The Turkish government blamed the attack on the PKK.<sup>269</sup>

A wide range of Iraqi politicians and organizations condemned the attacks, including Prime Minister al-Kadhimi, KRG officials, Muqtada al-Sadr, and Asa'ib Ahl Al-Haq, an Iran-aligned militia that operates in Iraq.<sup>270</sup> State noted that the Iraqi government's reaction to the

**On July 20, in an incident that attracted wide attention—and outrage—9 Iraqi tourists were killed and 33 injured in what was reported to be an artillery attack on a tourist resort in Dohuk province.**

incident went beyond those following prior incidents when civilian casualties were attributed to Turkish forces.<sup>271</sup> Following the attack, Iraq's foreign ministry recalled its chargé d'affaires from Ankara, and Iraq's parliament formed a committee to investigate further.<sup>272</sup> On July 25, the UN Security Council condemned the attack "in the strongest terms," without fixing responsibility on any party, and called for an investigation.<sup>273</sup>

The attack became an occasion for intra-Iraqi political maneuverings, setting up conflict among Iraqi leaders about the best course of action to take to respond to Turkish activities. Al-Sadr, leading a major Shia bloc, called for canceling all security arrangements with the Turkish government, and halting air and land traffic between the two countries.<sup>274</sup> In August, leader of the Fateh Alliance, another Shia bloc, threatened to take military action; he was quoted by a media source as saying that "the Iraqi government so far has chosen silence. Popular Mobilization Forces have the capability to stand against the Turkish aggressions if the government gives consent."<sup>275</sup>

The Iraqi government said it would cooperate in an international investigation into the July 25 attack and had evidence that the shells were of a kind used by Turkish forces, but it did not immediately display the evidence, according to a news report.<sup>276</sup> Bashiqa is the only Turkish base outside of the Iraqi Kurdistan Region that has reportedly been under attack from Shia militias, including on August 26, when nine rockets fired by "unidentified militants," landed near the base without causing casualties, according to one report citing the Kurdish Counter Terrorism Service.<sup>277</sup>

On September 10, the Turkish intelligence chief, Hakan Fidan, traveled to Baghdad to soothe tensions, meeting with President Barham Saleh, Prime Minister al-Kadhimi, and Parliament Speaker Muhammad al-Halbousi. Fidan reportedly said that the Turkish government was ready to set up a commission to investigate the killings at Zakhko, Dohuk province.<sup>278</sup> He also reportedly discussed water-sharing concerns relative to the Tigris and Euphrates rivers and possibly providing military equipment to Iraq.<sup>279</sup>

Additional information about the Turkish-PKK conflict during the quarter can be found in the classified appendix to this report.

## STABILIZATION

The U.S. Government seeks a stable Iraq capable of suppressing insurgencies and violent extremist organizations at the local government and law enforcement levels. The U.S. Government funds programs that seek to accelerate the restoration of essential services in conflict-affected areas of Iraq. In addition, the U.S. Government assists ethnic and religious minority communities and supports programs that help displaced persons return with dignity, safely, and voluntarily to their places of origin or settle in other destinations of their choosing.<sup>280</sup>

USAID reported that it supported stabilization activities through 11 programs funded by Office of Transition Initiatives and the Middle East Bureau. Approximately \$76 million in funds were obligated in FY 2022 for these programs.<sup>281</sup> (See Table 2.)



Table 2.

**USAID-funded Stabilization Programs in Iraq**

Program	Activities
<p><b>Funding Facility for Stabilization</b> Aims to stabilize areas recently liberated from ISIS by restoring damaged or destroyed essential services and providing the conditions for a dignified, safe, and voluntary return of IDPs to their homes. FY 2022: \$36,000,000</p>	<p>USAID is the largest contributor to this 29-donor, multilateral program. Implementer: UNDP</p>
<p><b>Durable Communities and Economic Opportunities</b> Aims to build resilient, adaptive communities and advance economic well-being in target communities in Iraq by addressing underlying drivers of conflict and increasing community leadership of inclusive local development. FY 2022: \$4,000,000</p>	<p>Engaged selected communities impacted by conflict and their leadership to identify and resolve conflict sustainably and peacefully through inclusive dialogue and practical solutions. Provided training and networking services to Iraqi victims of war to help them gain high-quality and sustainable sources of livelihood. Implementer: Chemonics</p>
<p><b>Shared Future</b> Supports the durable return for IDPs from the Ninewa Plain, focusing on the historically religious and ethnic minority communities. FY 2022: \$6,815,321</p>	<p>Worked with youth, and community and religious leaders to increase mutual understanding, tolerance, and trust both within their communities and with other communities. Improved vocational and leadership skills and youth livelihood opportunities through targeted vocational training. Implementer: Catholic Relief Services</p>
<p><b>Iraq Response and Resilience Program</b> FY 2022: \$0</p>	<p>Rehabilitated nine water treatment units in Basrah that will provide over 640,000 beneficiaries with potable water. Implementer: UNDP</p>
<p><b>Safe Return</b> FY 2022: \$0</p>	<p>Assisted IDPs from minority communities in the Ninewa Plain who are survivors of severe human rights abuses to return and reintegrate into their communities of origin. Implementer: Heartland Alliance</p>
<p><b>Supporting the Vulnerable Populations in Iraq</b> Provides livelihood, and social-cohesion services to support the return and recovery of vulnerable ethnic and religious minority communities in the Hamdaniya, Tel Kayf, and Bashiqa in the Ninewa Plain and Sinjar in western Ninewa Province. FY 2022: \$10,000,000</p>	<p>Supported the return of displaced populations from ethnic and religious minorities in Ninewa Plain and western Ninewa through activities related to livelihoods, housing, community peacebuilding, education, and psychosocial services. Implementer: IOM</p>

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Program	Activities
<p><b>Transitional Assistance to IDPs in Erbil, Iraq</b>                      Assists vulnerable IDP families with immediate household needs, such as shelter and food, and ease their return home when possible.                      FY 2022: \$600,000</p>	<p>Provided cash assistance to support the IDPs from Ninewa province in protracted displacement in Erbil and assisted beneficiaries to prepare for durable solutions for their families through targeted information and planning sessions.                      Implementer: Catholic Relief Services</p>
<p><b>Strengthening the Ankawa Humanitarian Committee to Response to Communities in Crisis</b>                      Supports building the capacity of the AHC while responding to the on-going needs of IDPs in Iraq through institutional capacity-building and organizational development.                      FY 2022: \$1,000,000</p>	<p>Strengthened the capacity of the Ankawa Humanitarian Committee and prepared them to fully engage with USAID on future development initiatives through strengthened capacity and commitment.                      Implementer: Ankawa Humanitarian Committee</p>
<p><b>Building Resilience in Children</b>                      Leverages Ahlan Simsim’s unique approach that combines locally driven, crisis-sensitive and age-appropriate interventions to increase resilience capacities among children, families and communities impacted by conflict and violence.                      FY 2022: \$5,000,000</p>	<p>Engaged families and communities impacted by conflict and violence using a combination of original multimedia, direct services, and youth engagement programming to increase resilience capacities that help to counter malign influences and prevent radicalization and violent extremism.                      Implementer: Sesame Workshop</p>
<p><b>Preserving the Cultural Heritage of Minority Communities in Iraq</b>                      Aims to contribute to communal healing, intercommunal understanding, and appreciation of the diversity of Iraq, a fundamental step toward the promotion and actualization of democracy.                      FY 2022: \$0</p>	<p>Partnered with local Iraqi organizations to describe and document the tangible and intangible heritage of religious and ethnic minority communities in Iraq.                      Created digitally documented collections as databases, built for portability, interoperability, and accessibility.</p>
<p><b>Iraq Community Resilience Initiative II</b>                      ICRI Phase II provides direct assistance to Iraqi partners to empower inclusive civic action with the goal of supporting a prosperous and inclusive Iraq. This is achieved by improving positive perceptions of civic engagement among Iraqis and increasing community mobilization around national causes.                      FY 2022: \$12,500,000</p>	<p>Supported increased positive perceptions of civic engagement.                      Supported increased community mobilization around national causes.                      Supported dialogue between citizens and elected officials, as well as cultural and social spaces that foster engagement and interaction among diverse community members.                      Highlighted commonalities that foster unity and a shared identity across Iraq, including in the new community spaces south of Baghdad, including Nasiriya, Basra Center, Islah, al-Madina, among others, particularly in Dhi Qar province.                      Implementer: Chemonics</p>

Source: USAID Middle East Bureau, response to USAID OIG request for information, 9/23/2022.

## HUMANITARIAN ASSISTANCE

The UN Humanitarian Needs Overview for Iraq, released in March, reported that 2.5 million Iraqis are in need of humanitarian assistance, a 39 percent decrease from the 4.1 million people in need identified in the 2021 overview. Those in need of assistance include returnees and approximately 1.2 million internally displaced persons (IDP).<sup>282</sup>

USAID Bureau for Humanitarian Assistance (BHA) provides humanitarian assistance to vulnerable Iraqis affected by conflict, including but not limited to those displaced by violence. USAID BHA provides life-saving aid, including food assistance, water, sanitation and hygiene, shelter, protection, and emergency healthcare services.<sup>283</sup> The State's Bureau of Population, Refugees, and Migration (PRM) provides assistance to vulnerable refugees and displaced persons. (See Tables 3 and 4.)

Table 3.

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

Program	Activities
<b>Water, Sanitation, and Hygiene</b>	Distributed 3,148 hygiene kits in Ninewa and Anbar provinces that benefitted 2,920 individuals and provided hygiene promotion activities that reached 22,879 individuals.  Continued regular operation and maintenance of water, sanitation, and hygiene facilities, benefiting 14,939 individuals. Provided solid waste management services to 18,246 individuals in camps and collective centers and desludging services for 13,965 individuals.
<b>Protection</b>	Provided protection assistance services to 62,966 individuals, including legal assistance, child protection, gender-based violence prevention, case management, and awareness raising, psychosocial support, protection referrals, and women's empowerment services in Ninewa, Mosul, Sinja, Salah Al Din, Baiji, Shirqat and Tikrit districts.

**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, food assistance, shelter and settlements, and coordination and information management programs for vulnerable populations in conflict-affected areas of Iraq.

**Source:** USAID BHA, response to USAID OIG request for information, 9/26/2022.

Table 4.

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

Implementer	Activity Highlights
<b>UNHCR (UN Refugee Agency)</b> Global organization dedicated to saving lives, protecting rights and building a better future for refugees, other forcibly displaced communities and stateless people.	Worked to improve the conditions for dignified and voluntary returns to areas of origin, local integration, and settlement in new locations, with assistance like civil documentation and legal assistance, social cohesion support, financial assistance, health consultations, and protection monitoring and advocacy.  Through the Displacement Tracking Matrix, collected data on displacement, conditions in areas of return, and main barriers to return for IDPs and returnees.

*(continues on next page)*

Implementer	Activity Highlights
<p><b>IOM (UN Migration Organization)</b> Provides a comprehensive response to the humanitarian needs of migrants, IDPs, returnees, and host communities.</p>	<p>Worked to improve the conditions for dignified and voluntary returns to areas of origin, local integration, and settlement in new locations, with assistance like civil documentation and legal assistance, social cohesion support, financial assistance, health consultations, and protection monitoring and advocacy.</p> <p>Through the Displacement Tracking Matrix, collected data on displacement, conditions in areas of return, and main barriers to return for IDPs and returnees.</p>
<p><b>Other International Organizations</b> Supports refugees, IDPs, returnees, and other vulnerable communities in Iraq with a range of humanitarian assistance and services.</p>	<p>Provided beneficiaries with health, mental health and psychosocial support, legal assistance, shelter, prevention and response to gender-based violence and child protection issues, and more.</p>
<p><b>UNICEF and NGOs–Education</b> Supports an NGO-led consortium that seeks to increase access to education for displaced children.</p>	<p>Supported education services for displaced school-aged children, which is a key need for refugee, IDP, and returnee families. The consortium worked to provide educational kits and materials, incentivize volunteer teachers, conduct service referrals, implement trainings for teachers, and lead targeted, evidence-based advocacy around inclusive education.</p>
<p><b>NGOs–Livelihoods and Economic Empowerment</b> Supports NGO projects focusing on the restoration of income-generating and livelihoods opportunities.</p>	<p>Supported 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><b>NGOs–Protection</b> Supports NGO projects focusing on protection activities to reduce risk for refugees and IDPs.</p>	<p>Supported to beneficiaries included gender-based violence prevention and response activities, legal assistance and awareness-raising to remove legal barriers to durable solutions for displacement-affected individuals, case management, mental health and psychosocial support services, child protection and child safeguarding training, and support for community centers and Women &amp; Girls Safe Spaces.</p>

Source: State, response to State OIG request for information, 9/19/2022.

## DISPLACED PERSONS

The international community provides support to 26 internally displaced persons camps in the Iraqi Kurdistan Region and federal Iraq.<sup>284</sup> While the KRG provides some support using its own funds, most funds are provided by multinational contributions to UN agencies and NGOs, direct and indirect assistance and coordination of assistance by KRG and federal Iraq entities, and private donations. State PRM and USAID BHA support humanitarian activities in Iraq by providing funding to NGOs and UN agencies.<sup>285</sup> During the quarter, State program implementers cited some difficulties in navigating changes to registration of their organizations and information requested by the Iraqi government and the KRG.<sup>286</sup>

State reported that IDPs consistently listed insufficient shelter, insecurity and lack of assurance that they will be safe in their communities, a lack of livelihoods, difficulty obtaining civil documentation, and a lack of basic services as obstacles to their return. Most individuals affected by displacement were living on daily wages, and the movement

Since Iraqi repatriations first began in May 2021 and September 2022, the Iraqi government has repatriated approximately 754 families from al-Hol, including 155 families in August.

restrictions have significantly affected their ability to make ends meet. Many IDPs are at high risk of secondary displacement.<sup>287</sup>

## Administrative and Communications Challenges Hinder Repatriations of Residents of the al-Hol Camp

USAID reported that approximately 28,000 Iraqi citizens remained in the al-Hol camp in Syria during the quarter.<sup>288</sup> Since Iraqi repatriations first began in May 2021 and September 2022, the Iraqi government has repatriated approximately 754 families from al-Hol, including 155 families in August.<sup>289</sup>

Administrative and communications challenges involving screening and departure planning continued to contribute to the slow repatriation process.<sup>290</sup> These challenges included ensuring access to civil documentation for repatriating citizens, providing clear information about the repatriation process and timelines for those cleared to repatriate, maintaining family unit cohesion throughout the repatriation process, reuniting families that may have been separated, determining the legal status of individuals (including those who may be subject to criminal charges in Iraq), and ensuring due process.<sup>291</sup> Continuing instability in northeastern Syria also limited the ability of the Iraqi government to coordinate repatriations with the SDF, which provides security at al-Hol.<sup>292</sup>

As of mid-July, Jeddah 1 camp in Iraq hosted more than 200 households—nearly 950 individuals.<sup>293</sup> As of July 5, more than half of the households repatriated from Syria’s al-Hol camp since May 2021 had returned to their areas of origin while nearly 90 households had relocated elsewhere due to perceived inability to successfully reintegrate, to obtain shelter and livelihoods, or to co-locate with other family members.<sup>294</sup>

## Iraqi Parliament Passes \$17.1 Billion Food Security Bill

In June, Iraq’s parliament passed a \$17.1 billion “Emergency Support for Food Security and Development” bill, which is expected to enable the Iraqi government to provide essential services and fund government salaries.<sup>295</sup> Approximately 28 percent of the bill is allocated for food security, including the purchase of wheat and other staples, payments to farmers, and subsidies for seeds, fertilizers, and irrigation systems.<sup>296</sup> The bulk of the remaining funds is designated for debt collection concerning energy imports; development of provinces other than the Kurdistan region; social security; stipends for part-time teachers, contractors, and recent top graduates; oil producing or refining provinces; and additional funding for provinces “impacted by terrorism” and the provinces of Maysan, Dhi-Qar, Salah ad-Din, Wasit, Babil, and Muthanna.<sup>297</sup>

Due to severe droughts, record high temperatures, soil erosion and salination, rising production costs, and production disruptions due to conflict and insecurity, domestic food production has not matched Iraq’s growing population, according to the World Bank.<sup>298</sup> Iraq imports over half of its food needs and is vulnerable to rising global food prices and supply issues.<sup>299</sup> The World Bank stated that subsidies and direct transfers partly reduce the impact of rising global food prices, but only short-term.<sup>300</sup>





A U.S. Army M1A2 Abrams Main Battle Tank arrives at an undisclosed location within the U.S. Central Command area of responsibility. (U.S. Air Force photo)

## SYRIA

50 Security

64 Stabilization

69 Humanitarian Assistance



## SYRIA

In Syria, the U.S. Government seeks conditions where ISIS is unable to resurge and eastern Syria is stable and secure.<sup>301</sup> Core U.S. policy priorities in Syria also include supporting the expansion of humanitarian access throughout Syria; promoting accountability for the Assad regime's atrocities, respect for human rights and nonproliferation, including through the imposition of targeted sanctions; and supporting a Syrian-led political process under UN Security Council Resolution (UNSCR) 2254.<sup>302</sup>

**Soldiers fire mortar rounds as part of a training exercise near At Tanf Garrison. (U.S. Army photo)**

## SECURITY

Coalition forces work with the Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) in northeastern Syria, which are the Coalition's key partner against ISIS, and the Mughawir al Thawra (MaT), a small force that partners with U.S. forces at the At Tanf Garrison, located further south near the confluence of the Iraq, Syria and Jordan borders.<sup>303</sup>



The SDF operates in the Eastern Syria Security Area, which includes parts of Hasakah and Dar az Zawr governorates east of the Euphrates River, as well as portions of Raqqah and Aleppo governorates.<sup>304</sup> The MaT occupies outposts across a 6,000 square kilometer deconfliction zone around At Tanf. The MaT serves as the primary security and stability force, deterring ISIS operations and securing the At Tanf perimeter. The MaT provides force protection against pro-regime forces and Iranian-aligned militia group positions surrounding the deconfliction zone.<sup>305</sup>

## OPERATING ENVIRONMENT

The SDF, with the support of Coalition forces, continued to maintain pressure on ISIS throughout northeastern Syria despite pressure from Türkiye and Turkish-supported Syrian opposition forces, Russia, the Syrian regime, and Iran-aligned militia groups.<sup>306</sup> (See page 52.) These rival actors seek to erode the SDF base of support by attacking SDF forces and sowing discontent in local communities in northeastern Syria. At the same time, some actors conduct limited operations against ISIS.<sup>307</sup> CJTF-OIR said that it is critical that regional actors continue to apply operational pressure on ISIS to eradicate its influence.<sup>308</sup>

State said that Iranian forces, their proxies, and Iran-backed armed groups continued to “threaten regional stability and the security of our allies and partners...and play a particularly destabilizing role in Syria.”<sup>309</sup> (See pages 29-32.)

The volatile political landscape in northeastern Syria complicates execution of the defeat-ISIS mission, CJTF-OIR said.<sup>310</sup> ISIS exploits operational seams between conflicting sides and any pause in operations against the group creates opportunities for ISIS to exploit at-risk populations and regenerate its military strength.<sup>311</sup>

**SDF leaders say that their highest priority is defending against Turkish attacks in northern Syria, and continued to express concerns during the quarter that the need to address Turkish activity jeopardizes their ability to execute counter-ISIS operations.**

## Tensions Between SDF, Turkish Forces Escalate

SDF leaders say that their highest priority is defending against Turkish attacks in northern Syria, and continued to express concerns during the quarter that the need to address Turkish activity jeopardizes their ability to execute counter-ISIS operations.<sup>312</sup> The U.S. European Command (USEUCOM) noted that the SDF has diverted resources away from counter-ISIS operations to prioritize defense against Turkish actions.<sup>313</sup> The SDF said in a statement that it delayed a large-scale operation at the al-Hol camp for displaced persons until the end of August due to the threat of a large-scale security Turkish incursion into northern Syria.<sup>314</sup>

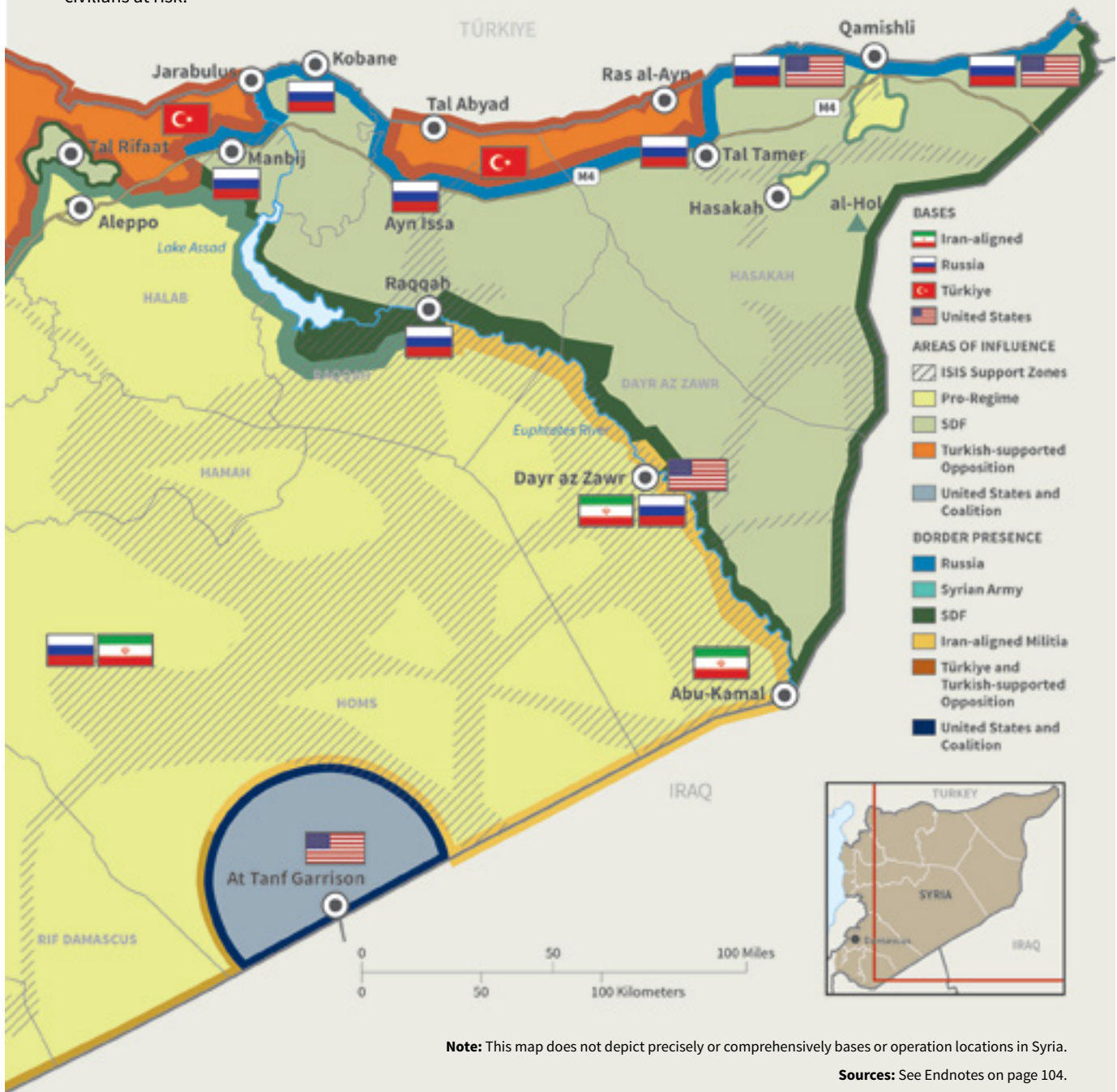
Deadly exchanges of indirect fire and unmanned aerial vehicle (UAV) attacks increased during the quarter between the SDF and Turkish forces and their allied Turkish-backed Syrian opposition forces.<sup>315</sup> However, Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan’s threat of a full-scale military incursion did not materialize after he failed to obtain support from Syria’s allies, Russia and Iran, according to press reporting.<sup>316</sup>

During the quarter, Turkish forces conducted a series of UAV strikes on a range of targets in northern Syria including personnel belonging to the Kurdish People’s Protection Units, the main fighting force of the SDF, killing a commander and multiple SDF fighters as well as civilians.<sup>317</sup> In August, following a Turkish attack on Kobane that resulted in civilian deaths, the SDF claimed to have retaliated with cross-border strikes.<sup>318</sup> After a Turkish UAV

# THE OPERATING ENVIRONMENT IN SYRIA

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

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





Turkish shelling on Kobane city in August. (SDF-press.com photo)

attack killed four teenage girls at a volleyball match at a UN-sponsored education center on August 18, the SDF launched a rocket attack on a Turkish-supported opposition base in northern Syria.<sup>319</sup>

President Erdogan has been threatening a military incursion into northern Syria since May that would target a region of northern Syria that lies between Tal Rifaat and Manbij.<sup>320</sup> Turkish forces escalated their strike campaign against the People's Protection Units, whom the Turkish government blames for routinely conducting attacks against Turkish and Turkish-supported Syrian opposition forces in Syria, according to media reports.<sup>321</sup>

In mid-August, media reports said the Turkish government began diplomatic negotiations with the Syrian regime at Russia's request, which the DIA reported likely delayed a Turkish ground operation.<sup>322</sup>

### Turkish Counter-ISIS Operations

The Office of the Under Secretary of Defense for Policy (OUSD(P)) reported that DoD leaders engaged with Turkish counterparts to caution against actions that would disrupt the counter-ISIS campaign in northeastern Syria.<sup>323</sup> U.S. officials communicated that the United States opposes all actions that undermine the counter-ISIS mission and articulated concerns that recent operations by Turkish-aligned forces not only jeopardize the counterterrorism campaign, but also impact the safety of civilians and the security of SDF-managed detention facilities holding ISIS fighters.<sup>324</sup>

Meanwhile, Turkish forces continued their own counter-ISIS operations. USEUCOM said these operations constrained ISIS's ability to successfully conduct attacks in and from Turkish territory during the quarter, but still had not dissuaded ISIS from using Turkish territory as a facilitation hub to support regional and global activity.<sup>325</sup> Turkish security forces routinely conducted raids and detained ISIS members in an effort to deter cross-border facilitation, constrain financial and logistic support, and disrupt potential threats.<sup>326</sup>

The DIA reported that in August, Turkish forces in Syria detained 5 ISIS members who were trying to enter Turkish territory at the Jarabulus border crossing.<sup>327</sup> In September, the Turkish government announced the capture of Bashar Hattab Ghazal al-Sumaidai, a senior ISIS member also known as Abu Zeyd, according to media reporting.<sup>328</sup>

## Syrian Regime Leverages Turkish Threats to Influence SDF

In response to the Turkish incursion threat, the SDF increased its military cooperation with the Syrian regime, enabling the expansion of the regime's military footprint in northeastern Syria.<sup>329</sup> During the quarter, the SDF permitted the regime to increase its presence in new areas, such as in the outskirts of Manbij near the region of the threatened Turkish incursion.<sup>330</sup>

The DIA said that the greater cooperation gave the Syrian regime opportunities to press for concessions from the SDF.<sup>331</sup> In response to the regime's support, the SDF signed a new agreement with the regime in late July for an increase in oil sales to the regime from SDF-controlled areas.<sup>332</sup>

In addition, as of mid-July, the Syrian regime reinforced its military positions in the Aleppo governorate in response to the Turkish incursion threat, deploying more than 400 troops, along with armored vehicles, tanks, and heavy artillery.<sup>333</sup>

## Syrian Regime Counter-ISIS Operations

Syrian regime forces continued their own counter-ISIS operations during the quarter. However, the DIA assessed that these operations have "failed to durably suppress ISIS" in the Central Syrian Desert, prevent hit-and-run attacks against pro-regime forces positions, or close ISIS lines of communications in Syria.<sup>334</sup>

The DIA noted that the Syrian regime largely relies on less-experienced military units, foreign partners, and poorly disciplined Syrian paramilitary forces to prevent ISIS's low-level insurgency from forming overt large formations.<sup>335</sup>

Included among the regime's foreign partners supporting counterinsurgency operations are Iran-organized foreign paramilitary units and the Iran-supported Syrian National Defense Forces, as well as the Russia-supported Liwa al-Quds and 5th Corps.<sup>336</sup> The regime also occasionally supports a more robust counter-ISIS clearing strategy by using formal regime units such as the elite Syrian presidential guard force, known as the Republican Guard, augmented by other pro-regime elements.<sup>337</sup> Nevertheless, these sweeps rarely durably decrease ISIS's presence in the area, the DIA said.<sup>338</sup>

## Russian Forces Continue Operations Against ISIS With Limited Results

The DIA said that Russia's force disposition in northeastern Syria remained largely unchanged aside from minor equipment movements.<sup>339</sup> In mid-August, Russia transferred an S-300 anti-aircraft battery from Masyaf, Syria, to the southern Russian port of Novorossiysk in an attempt to bolster its air defenses against Ukraine.<sup>340</sup> Russia publicly refuted claims of a force drawdown in Syria and continued to reinforce its positions in Tal Rifaat, Manbij, the southern outskirts of Kobane, and Ain Issa.<sup>341</sup>

As of mid-September, Russian forces continued to conduct joint operations with Syrian regime-aligned forces and additional military patrols in northern Syria in anticipation of a potential Turkish offensive.<sup>342</sup>

**As of mid-September, Russian forces continued to conduct joint operations with Syrian regime-aligned forces and additional military patrols in northern Syria in anticipation of a potential Turkish offensive.**

During the first 3 weeks of September, Russia conducted approximately 100 airstrikes against ISIS positions across Syria in support of the Syrian regime, the DIA reported.<sup>343</sup>

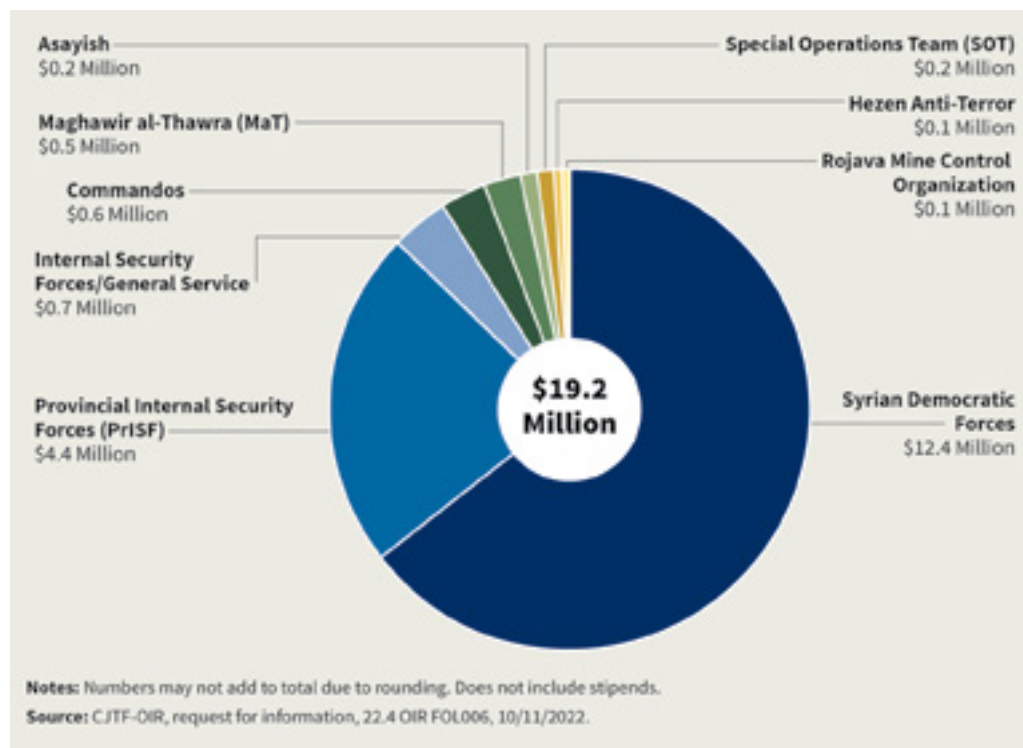
During the quarter, Russian forces doubled the number of air violations of deconfliction procedures established with the Coalition.<sup>344</sup> CJTF-OIR said that the majority of the violations were committed by Russian transport aircraft that were rerouted through the At Tanf Zone due to Turkish airspace restrictions imposed on the Russian military.<sup>345</sup> According to media reporting, the Turkish government closed its airspace to Russian aircraft in April.<sup>346</sup> CJTF-OIR said that the Russian deconfliction procedure violations did not cause any harm to Coalition or partner forces.<sup>347</sup>

### COALITION AND SDF OPERATIONS

As in Iraq, CJTF-OIR provided critical materials through the DoD Counter-ISIS Train and Equip Fund (CTEF) to enable partner forces to achieve the enduring defeat ISIS.<sup>348</sup> CTEF is the primary fiscal authority for providing material and other defeat-ISIS support to vetted Syrian partner forces.<sup>349</sup> Of the \$500 million CTEF appropriation for FY 2022, \$155 million is designated to support partner forces in Syria. During the quarter, CJTF-OIR used the CTEF to provide \$19.2 million in materiel and support to the SDF, bringing the total FY 2022 CTEF support delivered to Syrian partner forces to \$122.7 million as of the end of the quarter.<sup>350</sup> (See Figure 6.)

Figure 6.

#### CTEF-funded Support to Syrian Partner Forces, July–September 2022



Equipment provided to Syrian partner forces through the CTEF during the quarter included force protection equipment, vehicles, personal protective equipment, and materiel to include medical supplies, and small arms and ammunition.<sup>351</sup> U.S. forces also used CTEF funds to support detention facility improvements and partner forces in the al-Hol displaced persons camp.<sup>352</sup>

## Coalition Forces Kill Top ISIS Leader and Conduct Joint Patrols With SDF

Coalition forces continued operations against ISIS leaders during the quarter. On July 12, a Coalition UAV strike killed a top ISIS leader, Mahir al-Agal, which the U.S. Central Command (USCENTCOM) said disrupted ISIS plots outside Iraq and Syria.<sup>353</sup>

Coalition forces also continued to use Bradley Fighting Vehicles as a show of force and to conduct more than 35 joint patrols with the SDF, though the vehicles were not involved in any enemy engagements during the quarter.<sup>354</sup> U.S. forces also used the vehicles during multiple joint live fire exercises with the SDF.<sup>355</sup>

CJTF-OIR said that the Bradley Fighting Vehicles provide added force protection to U.S. and partner force bases and critical assets, facilitate advising efforts, and assist partner forces in maintaining civil stability and security.<sup>356</sup> The vehicles are well suited to patrolling because they bring firepower, protection, and mobility to U.S. forces that is unmatched in the region, CJTF-OIR said.<sup>357</sup>

## Coalition Trains SDF Counterterrorism and Guard Forces

CJTF-OIR reported that in July and August, the SDF conducted a total of 13 partnered operations with Coalition forces.<sup>358</sup>

CJTF-OIR assessed that the SDF is moderately capable of conducting both conventional-type operations and counterterrorism operations.<sup>359</sup> In addition, the SDF has its own intelligence organizations to support operations against ISIS.<sup>360</sup>

During the quarter U.S. advisors provided recommendations to the SDF on how to identify and target ISIS.<sup>361</sup> Coalition forces also trained SDF Commandos and Internal Security Forces (Asayish) to provide security at detention centers and displaced persons camps and trained the SDF on weapon systems and ranges, vehicle maintenance, and intelligence collection and analysis.<sup>362</sup>

CJTF-OIR said that it used \$388,000 in materiel through the CTEF for force protection improvements at the Shaddadi Training Facility to reinforce entry control points, replace existing damaged wall segments, and provide perimeter protection, including T-walls, concertina wire, pickets, and barbed wire.<sup>363</sup>

**Coalition forces also continued to use Bradley Fighting Vehicles as a show of force and to conduct more than 35 joint patrols with the SDF, though the vehicles were not involved in any enemy engagements during the quarter.**



A U.S. Army Soldier conducts a mortar operational rehearsal with the Syrian partner force Mughawir al-Thawra, at At Tanf Garrison. (U.S. Army photo)

## MUGHAWIR AL-THAWRA OPERATIONS AND TRAINING

### MaT Trains in Base Defense and Airstrike Response

CJTF-OIR reported that the MaT conducts routine security and reconnaissance patrols in the deconfliction zone around the At Tanf Garrison and maintains a robust human intelligence network.<sup>364</sup> During the quarter, the MaT conducted several dozen partnered presence and security patrols with Coalition forces. The MaT did not conduct any unilateral operations during the quarter.<sup>365</sup>

Coalition forces continued to advise and train the MaT during the quarter, with no significant changes to Coalition advising activities since the previous quarter.<sup>366</sup> Coalition training included rehearsing and executing dispersion techniques to mitigate conventional air attack and one-way UAV threats.<sup>367</sup> On August 15, two one-way UAVs with explosive payloads struck the At Tanf Garrison compound. The attack resulted in no casualties and minor damage to MaT assets.<sup>368</sup>

MaT forces were involved in live fire defense training, supported by Coalition High Mobility Artillery Rocket Systems (HIMARS)—a long-range rocket artillery system.<sup>369</sup> CJTF-OIR said that the MaT were not trained directly on the systems, but were involved in three live fire exercises during which HIMARS were fired by Coalition forces.<sup>370</sup> The training also included mounted maneuver engagement.<sup>371</sup> CJTF-OIR said that this level of tactical and technical ability builds toward the training objectives of conducting engagements using a single command structure to coordinate between forces from multiple combat outposts. Training during the upcoming quarter will include close air support in live fire exercises.<sup>372</sup>

U.S. forces also provided the MaT with training on partnered reconnaissance and security patrol, small arms, medical response, and security operations.<sup>373</sup> Basic infantry and reconnaissance training focused on securing the perimeter of the deconfliction zone communicating during operations, and defending combat outposts.<sup>374</sup>

CJTF-OIR said that U.S. forces conducted training at MaT outposts while on patrol. In addition, U.S. forces conducted four specialized train-the-trainer clinics that were hosted at the At Tanf Garrison, including a combat lifesaver class, mortar training, rocket propelled grenade training, and chemical, biological, radiological, and nuclear protection training. Each of these clinics were attended by select personnel from each MaT outpost based on their assigned specialty (such as mortar crews or medics). This training was provided so that the attendees could subsequently teach the rest of the MaT at their outpost what they had learned in the clinic.<sup>375</sup>

Coalition forces also provided the MaT with small arms (M16s), rocket-propelled grenades, 120mm mortar systems, weapon sights, body armor and medical kits.<sup>376</sup>

## New MaT Commander Assumes Post

In September, a new MaT Commander, Colonel Farid Ali Qasim, assumed command.<sup>377</sup> According to local media, the change sparked internal protests among MaT leadership.<sup>378</sup> MaT leaders objected to the appointment as “foreign interference” and suggested Qasim was an outsider. A MaT spokesman said that following negotiations with Coalition officials, MaT leaders accepted the appointment.<sup>379</sup>

Media also reported that protests occurred at the Rukban displaced persons camp, spreading to the nearby At Tanf Garrison.<sup>380</sup> The Syrian Observatory for Human Rights said that security was heightened at the MaT posts surrounding At Tanf ahead of a meeting calling the MaT together to announce the change of command.<sup>381</sup>

Speaking to local media, CJTF-OIR said that the change of command was conducted “to ensure the long-term success” of the MaT and to enhance regional partnerships and security.<sup>382</sup>

## SDF DETENTION FACILITIES

### Security at SDF Detention Facilities Improves, Vulnerabilities Remain

The SDF continued to hold approximately 10,000 ISIS members in detention centers during the quarter.<sup>383</sup> The population includes 5,000 Syrians, 3,000 Iraqis, and 2,000 non-Iraqi, non-Syrian fighters, which a State official said constituted the “single largest concentration of terrorist fighters in the world.”<sup>384</sup>

CJTF-OIR reported that many detention facilities were not built to hold detainees and their long-term viability is poor compared with “purpose-built” facilities.<sup>385</sup> Approximately half of the detainees live in “purpose-built” detention facilities and the other half are held in about 24 “makeshift” facilities that include schools and community centers; hundreds of detainees are under 18 years of age, according to State.<sup>386</sup>

**U.S. forces conducted four specialized train-the-trainer clinics that were hosted at the At Tanf Garrison, including a combat lifesaver class, mortar training, rocket propelled grenade training, and chemical, biological, radiological, and nuclear protection training.**



**The DIA reported that ISIS exploits weaknesses in SDF control of detention facilities to smuggle in weapons, communications equipment, and other items.**

The DIA reported that ISIS exploits weaknesses in SDF control of detention facilities to smuggle in weapons, communications equipment, and other items.<sup>387</sup> Guards and officials at the detention facilities are particularly susceptible to corruption and bribery.<sup>388</sup> The DIA noted that the SDF's security vulnerabilities permitted ISIS to use weapons and intelligence gathered by members within the Ghwayran Detention Facility during its January 2022 attack at the facility.<sup>389</sup> That attack led to a 10-day battle that resulted in the deaths of hundreds of ISIS fighters and dozens of SDF personnel, and the escape of dozens of ISIS detainees.<sup>390</sup>

CJTF-OIR said that DoD assistance to the SDF included training and other assistance to support the growth and professionalization of the guard force at detention facilities.<sup>391</sup> The SDF have bio-enrolled a majority of the ISIS fighters in detention and continue to train with Coalition advisors on how to maintain adequate security at these facilities.<sup>392</sup> Though there were no major uprisings at SDF-run facilities during the quarter, CJTF-OIR reported that ISIS continued to seek to facilitate jailbreaks to help regenerate its force.<sup>393</sup>

During the quarter, USCENTCOM approved CTEF-funded improvement projects at two youth detention facilities in northeastern Syria and sought bids from potential contractors. These include the Panorama facility at an estimated \$2.4 million, and the al-Houri youth facility at \$3.1 million. The proposed renovation and refurbishment of existing infrastructure includes enhancing force protection elements. CJTF-OIR said this work will improve security and provide more humane and secure conditions for detainees.<sup>394</sup>

The U.S. Government also continues to encourage repatriation of foreign terrorist fighters held in SDF detention to their countries of origin for rehabilitation, reintegration, and where appropriate, prosecution.<sup>395</sup> CJTF-OIR said that during the quarter, Iraq repatriated 253 detainees.<sup>396</sup>

Further information about the repatriation of foreign terrorist fighters held in SDF detention facilities is available in the classified appendix to this report.

## **DoD Advances Plan to Construct New SDF Detention Facility in Rumaylan**

During the quarter, the DoD notified Congress of its intent to construct a purpose-built detention facility in Rumaylan in Hasakah governorate. OUSD(P) and CJTF-OIR reported that the new facility will provide secure, humane conditions for ISIS detainees in SDF custody.<sup>397</sup> CJTF-OIR said the facility will significantly increase the safety and security of both detainees and guards, and reduce the threat of detainee escape.<sup>398</sup>

The facility will help enable the SDF to detain ISIS fighters in accordance with the law of armed conflict, including relevant portions of the Geneva Conventions, and with respect for human rights law, including the principle of not returning detainees to countries where they could face danger.<sup>399</sup>

CJTF-OIR said that the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers intends to prepare a statement of work and applicable designs for the solicitation and final contract award.<sup>400</sup>

## DISPLACED PERSONS CAMPS

### SDF Launches Major Operation to Clear ISIS Operatives from al-Hol

On August 25, the SDF launched an operation to clear ISIS operatives from the al-Hol displaced persons camp in northeastern Syria. The DIA reported that during the quarter, ISIS continued to use violence to intimidate residents, indoctrinate and recruit children, and threaten or punish those it viewed as disloyal.<sup>401</sup> CJTF-OIR reported that the 24-day operation will likely have “notable impact” on ISIS presence in the camp, though any changes to security or safety will likely not be immediately visible.<sup>402</sup>

During the operation, SDF Asayish forces detained more than 200 suspected ISIS members.<sup>403</sup> The SDF reported that it found a large quantity of killing and torture devices used by ISIS to forcefully indoctrinate and recruit camp residents.<sup>404</sup> SDF forces freed six women who were tortured and chained by ISIS operatives.<sup>405</sup> USCENTCOM said some of these women had been captured as children and held by ISIS for years, including one teenage girl who was captured at the age of nine in 2014 and had been sold multiple times by ISIS members.<sup>406</sup>

The Syrian Democratic Forces conduct an operation to clear suspected ISIS facilitators in the al-Hol displaced persons camp. (SDF-press.com photo)



**The SDF said that ISIS had sought to take over al-Hol and that Asayish forces had repeatedly thwarted ISIS attempts to break holes in the security walls and gates from inside and outside the camp.**

The SDF also confiscated 25 kilograms of explosives and 25 hand grenades, and removed ISIS supply and logistics materials, USCENTCOM reported.<sup>407</sup> SDF forces destroyed 2 dozen tunnels and trenches used to hide weapons and facilitate movement, as well as dozens of tents used by ISIS to teach its ideology and to conduct court-like proceedings to impose punishments on those viewed as having violated its violent extremist ideology.<sup>408</sup>

During the operation, two SDF forces died during a firefight with ISIS fighters.<sup>409</sup> In addition, the SDF reported that its Asayish forces thwarted an attempt by ISIS members to escape the camp, killing one person and arresting six others. The SDF said it also confiscated two machine guns and an explosive belt.<sup>410</sup>

CJTF-OIR said that as of the end of the quarter, no major security incidents had occurred at al-Hol since the operation ended.<sup>411</sup>

The security operations at al-Hol limited the work of humanitarian assistance organizations at the camp.<sup>412</sup> Only life-saving activities continued, namely health programs, according to a statement from the camp management.<sup>413</sup> The USAID Bureau for Humanitarian Assistance (BHA) reported that protection teams from one BHA joint health implementing partner were unable to enter the camp.<sup>414</sup> The implementing partner reached out to camp authorities to request resumption of activities, but restrictions continued through the end of the quarter.<sup>415</sup>

## **Dire Conditions, Violence Persist at Al-Hol**

The SDF said that ISIS had sought to take over al-Hol and that Asayish forces had repeatedly thwarted ISIS attempts to break holes in the security walls and gates from inside and outside the camp.<sup>416</sup>

CJTF-OIR said that while many of the camp's 54,000 residents came from ISIS-held territory and are family members of ISIS fighters, the vast majority of al-Hol residents are victims, not ISIS members.<sup>417</sup> According to data provided by State, more than 50 percent of camp residents are children under the age of 12.<sup>418</sup> CJTF-OIR said residents are living in dire, poor conditions, which makes them inclined to seek additional means for sustenance and stability.<sup>419</sup> These conditions provide fertile ground for ISIS to terrorize al-Hol residents and recruit from the vulnerable population.<sup>420</sup>

The DIA reported that ISIS regularly smuggles weapons, money, communications equipment, and other items into al-Hol and smuggles out women and adolescent children.<sup>421</sup> ISIS adherents in al-Hol have created institutions in the camp in an effort to “subvert camp-provided services,” and overt displays of allegiance by ISIS adherents “demonstrate the enduring presence of ISIS’s ideology” in the camp, the DIA said.<sup>422</sup>

On September 9, during the 24-day clearance operation, USCENTCOM Commander General Michael “Erik” Kurilla visited the camp. General Kurilla said the SDF operation at al-Hol was critical and would make the camp safer for all residents, most of whom he said rejected ISIS.<sup>423</sup> General Kurilla said that ISIS was preying on al-Hol’s children, calling the camp “a literal breeding ground for the next generation of ISIS.”<sup>424</sup>

State reported that there were 7 reported killings in al-Hol during the quarter, a decrease from 17 killings in the camp during the previous quarter.<sup>425</sup> State said it could not ascertain which killings were associated with ISIS.<sup>426</sup> The DIA reported that while most violence in the camp was conducted by ISIS, the poor conditions and scarce resources in the densely crowded camp are drivers for other criminality.<sup>427</sup>

State said that security in al-Hol Camp remained a challenge for local security partners, and threatened the civilian population and humanitarian workers who State said were “risking their lives to provide vital assistance.”<sup>428</sup> State said that the local governing authority, known as the Self-Administration of North and East Syria, the humanitarian community, and the U.S. Government continued work to improve both external and internal security without compromising humanitarian services at the camp.<sup>429</sup>

The State Counterterrorism Bureau announced during the quarter that it will oversee a new interagency al-Hol Working Group. Ian Moss, the Bureau’s Deputy Coordinator for Countering Violent Extremism and Terrorist Detentions, said at a meeting in late September that the goal of the working group is to “improve coordination of U.S. efforts to address the security and humanitarian situation” in northeastern Syria.<sup>430</sup> The group will work closely with the Coalition and humanitarian partners.<sup>431</sup>

**State said that security in al-Hol Camp remained a challenge for local security partners, and threatened the civilian population and humanitarian workers who State said were “risking their lives to provide vital assistance.”**

## **SDF Thwarts Suicide Bombing Attempt in Al-Hol**

ISIS operations targeting al-Hol did not halt after the SDF clearing operation. On September 20, the SDF thwarted a large suicide and truck bomb attack targeting the al-Hol camp after an ISIS vehicle rigged with explosives detonated prematurely in a village about 12 miles northeast of the camp.<sup>432</sup>

USCENTCOM said that 2 vehicles carrying 7 ISIS fighters wearing explosive vests were headed to the camp when one of the vehicles exploded.<sup>433</sup> SDF forces confronted the second vehicle and encountered two ISIS fighters. One fighter exploded his vest and the SDF shot and killed the second fighter.<sup>434</sup> The second vehicle was rigged with at least 50 kilograms of explosives.<sup>435</sup>

## **Coalition Trains Security Guards, Funds Security Projects in al-Hol, but Size of Force Not Adequate**

Coalition forces continued to train Asayish security forces to counter ISIS security threats in al-Hol. During the quarter, additional Asayish security forces completed training and an internal security fencing project began.<sup>436</sup>

CJTF-OIR reported that as of the end of the quarter, Coalition forces have trained more than 500 security forces, including approximately 30 women.<sup>437</sup> The Coalition, through CTEF, provided resources and funding for a variety of security improvement projects in the camp.<sup>438</sup>

However, CJTF-OIR noted that while the SDF has improved security at al-Hol, the size of the security force is “not adequate to disrupt all ISIS activity in the camp.”<sup>439</sup> CJTF-OIR added that it was difficult to assess whether security gaps in the camp exist beyond the ongoing projects, and said that further evaluation will be necessary once those projects are completed.<sup>440</sup>

## U.S. Support to Improve Conditions at IDP Camps

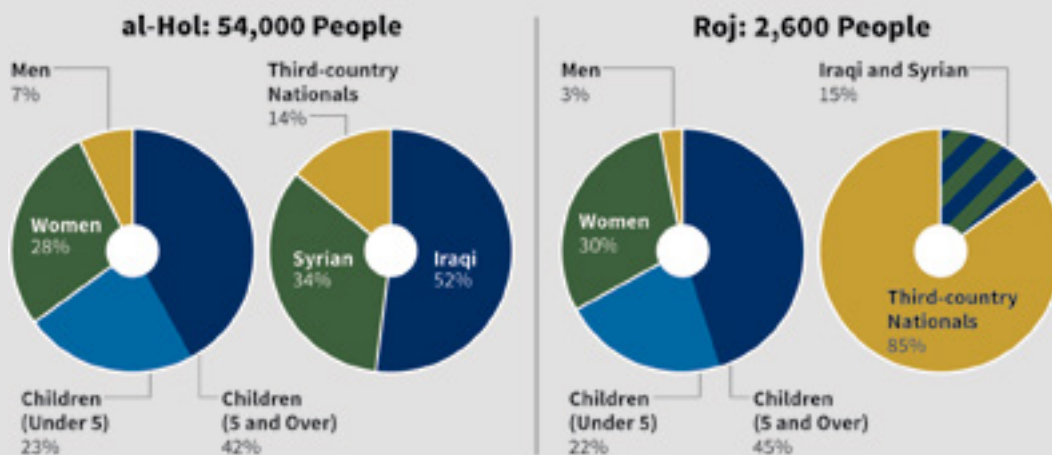
The al-Hol and Roj camps in Hasakah governorate are civilian, humanitarian camps for displaced persons and not detention facilities. The majority of the residents of both camps are women and children, with a quarter of the populations of both camps being children under 5. (See Figure 7.) Most of the small number of male residents, including 75 percent of men at al-Hol, are Iraqi nationals.<sup>441</sup>

State funds essential services at the 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 Self-Administration of North and East Syria.<sup>442</sup> Through U.S. support, humanitarian partners are enhancing the camp's physical infrastructure by improving the layout of shelters, latrines, and kitchens.<sup>443</sup> The U.S. Government also provides significant life-saving assistance for the camps through partnerships with UN humanitarian organizations and nongovernmental organizations.<sup>444</sup>

The United States continued to call on countries to repatriate their nationals from the camp. The U.S. position remains that the most durable mechanism to limit ISIS influence is for countries to repatriate their nationals and then rehabilitate, reintegrate, and, where appropriate, prosecute them in their countries of origin.<sup>445</sup> State said that reintegration of Syrians from al-Hol camp to their areas of origin continued to be slow, with only one group of 377 individuals departing from al-Hol to their home communities in Dayr az Zawr governorate during the quarter.<sup>446</sup>

Figure 7.

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



Source: State, response to State OIG request for information, 9/23/2022.

## STABILIZATION

State reported that stabilization assistance plays a critical role in this stage of the OIR mission by addressing the economic and social cleavages previously exploited by ISIS and other violent extremist groups, closing gaps in local service provider capacity, and supporting civil society to advocate for citizens’ needs.<sup>447</sup>

State’s stabilization programs work with local governance entities, civil society, and Syrian communities to support education, community security, independent media, civil society, reintegration, transitional justice, accountability, restoration of essential services, and a political resolution to the conflict in line with UN Security Council Resolution 2254.<sup>448</sup> All State stabilization programs in northeastern Syria continued during the quarter.<sup>449</sup> USAID reported that its stabilization programs during the quarter focused on livelihoods and economic recovery programming, as well as support to civil society and improving access to essential services.<sup>450</sup> (See Tables 5 and 6.) As previously reported, funding levels continue to present a challenge to sustaining stabilization activities.<sup>451</sup>

Table 5.

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

Program Goals	Activities During the Quarter
<p><b>Essential Services and Local Governance</b> Seeks to build local councils’ ability to provide essential services to their communities</p>	<p>Restored essential services in liberated areas east of the Euphrates River by building the response capacity of partners through operational and infrastructure assistance. Partnered with local governance entities to support first responders and garbage collection teams.</p> <p>Rehabilitated essential water infrastructure and helped local governance partners perform standard maintenance on their vehicles more efficiently.</p> <p>Trained local governance council members and partners in Dayr az Zawr governorate to conduct community outreach and awareness campaigns</p>
<p><b>Civil Society</b> Seeks to help civil society organizations restore essential services and livelihoods in areas liberated from ISIS</p>	<p>Supported Syrian civil society organizations as they restored essential services and livelihoods in areas liberated from ISIS.</p> <p>Strengthened the capacity of all civil society partners to serve and represent Syrians.</p> <p>Mitigated tensions between communities and displaced persons returning home by supporting civil society organizations to address root causes of tension, such as water access.</p>
<p><b>Education</b> Seeks to build the capacity of local councils, their education committees, and community based organizations to provide remedial numeracy, primary education, psychosocial support for children, vocational training, and schools</p>	<p>Taught thousands of children in one formal and three informal displaced persons camps.</p> <p>Worked with children and their caregivers to address trauma through social reintegration programs in Dayr az Zawr and Raqqah governorates. This brought together children with previous ISIS exposure and those without to build cohesion in their home communities.</p> <p>Rehabilitated schools, focusing on water, sanitation, and health facilities, and newly established Technical and Vocational Education Training centers in Qamishli, Dayr az Zawr, and Raqqah governorates. Provided training in computer skills, solar panel repair, and carpentry.</p> <p>Launched an adult literacy campaign and drafted a plan for teaching training.</p>

Program Goals	Activities During the Quarter
<p><b>Independent Media</b> Seeks to promote unbiased, professional, relevant reporting</p>	<p>Partnered with radio, online, and television media platforms in northeastern and northwestern Syria to produce content, including hundreds of hours of broadcast content and thousands of online stories.</p> <p>Content provided information about COVID-19, and countered violent extremism and disinformation perpetuated by Iran-backed militias, Russia, the Assad regime, violent extremist groups, and other malign actors.</p> <p>Trained and mentored journalists and producers in writing and digital storytelling skills, data visualization, verification, content revisioning, and social media analytics.</p> <p>Supported a media consumption survey to assess local media consumption and levels of trust in media. The results confirmed the extensive reach and impact of State-supported media outlets, which are regularly heard, seen, or visited by most of the population.</p>
<p><b>Community Security</b> Seeks to build the capacity of internal security forces to provide security in a way that supports, and is supported by, the communities they serve</p>	<p>Supported community security in northeastern Syria to build the capacity of internal security forces and the local governance entities that oversee them to provide security in a way that supports, and is supported by, the communities they serve.</p> <p>Trained internal security officers on a wide range of community policing skills, engaged with local community members, and rehabilitated facilities and streetlights in under-served areas.</p>
<p><b>Syrian Political Process</b> Seeks to strengthen the capabilities of stakeholders to participate in the Constitutional Committee and work with other UN-convened negotiations in support of UNSCR 2254</p>	<p>Strengthened capabilities of political process stakeholders to participate with Constitutional Committee and other UN-convened negotiations in support of UNSCR 2254.</p> <p>Fostered engagement with Syrian civil society organizations, local governance entities, and Syrian citizens, to include members of the Syrian diaspora.</p> <p>Supported workshops and dialogue sessions to help the Constitutional Committee solicit input and provide updates on political process negotiations to Syrian citizens inside Syria and in the diaspora.</p>

Source: State, response to State OIG request for information, 9/23/2022.

Table 6.

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

Program	Activities During the Quarter
<p><b>Elections and Political Processes</b></p>	<p><b>Assessments:</b> Produced assessments of the constitutional reform process, the northeastern Syria Social Contract draft and a conflict assessment.</p> <p><b>Training and Capacity Building:</b> Provided training and capacity building to 28 civil society organizations on sexual and gender-based violence, 20 women leaders on effective communication skills and outreach, and 18 civil society participants on government accountability.</p> <p><b>Community Dialogue:</b> Facilitated dialogues and roundtables on issue identification, effective communications, conflict analysis, and negotiations and mediation for local communities.</p>

Program	Activities During the Quarter
<p><b>Supporting Livelihoods in Syria</b></p>	<p>Provided six portable seed sorting machines to 6 villages made up of 13 cooperatives supporting over 3,150 individual farmers in the western countryside of Dayr az Zawr governorate.</p> <p>Worked with 120 sheep and cow breeders to plant alfalfa seed. Due to the rise in livestock feed prices and regular supply interruptions, many sheep herders and commercial breeders in northeastern Syria are forced to reduce herd sizes to remain viable. The alfalfa will provide nutrition for animals in 14 villages in Dayr az Zawr.</p>
<p><b>Syria Livelihoods Project</b></p>	<p><b>Support to Persons with Disabilities:</b> Worked with a local disabled persons organization to meet its stated goal of at least 5 percent of the workforce being persons with disabilities. Coordinated with public offices in Raqqa and Tabqa to provide regular updates on emerging vacancies and then match them with qualified beneficiaries seeking work. Since the program began, 154 job seekers with disabilities secured employment the public and private sector as electricians, administrative workers, janitors, and guards.</p> <p>Provided training to a local NGO, the Persons with Disabilities Office in Raqqa, and the Social Needs Office in Tabqa on entrepreneurship and business plan development. The first 30 beneficiaries, all of whom are women with disabilities, will receive training on business plan development and entrepreneurship prior to submitting fully developed business plans to the program for potential funding. The program will provide financial support to at least 200 micro, small, and medium enterprises, all of whom are owned by persons with disabilities and at least 50 percent of whom will be women. Plans for start-up or expansion of businesses include minimarket/grocery stores, childcare, home appliance repair, retail outlets and many others. Approved business plans will receive up to \$1500 in direct financial support.</p> <p>Launched a case management system that will register, assess and refer persons with disabilities, channeling individuals to livelihood support services.</p> <p>Helped disability offices in Raqqah and Tabqa develop strategic plans to improve services for persons with disabilities.</p> <p>Since the start of the program, provided career guidance services to 1,198 job seekers with disabilities including career guidance, financial support for their businesses, or referrals to other specialist service providers.</p> <p><b>Support to the Construction Sector:</b> Supplied 85 cinder block workshops across northeastern Syria with equipment and raw materials required to double their production and employ additional workers.</p> <p>135 block press operators completed on-the-job training at workshops in Raqqah and Dayr az Zawr governorates. To date, approximately 40 percent of those who completed their training intend to stay in their current workshops, while the others seek work elsewhere in the construction sector.</p>
<p><b>Economic Management for Stability in Northeast Syria</b></p>	<p><b>Agricultural Markets and Food Security:</b> Conducted site visits and engaged in extensive stakeholder consultations to update the program’s approach towards agricultural markets development and enhancing food security in the region.</p> <p><b>Private Sector Engagement:</b> Continued to provide technical assistance to over 60 enterprises with 1,000 sustainable job opportunities created. Relunched and expanded operations of t weaving and spinning and garment factories</p>



Program	Activities During the Quarter
<b>Essential Services, Good Governance, and Economic Recovery</b>	<p><b>Rehabilitation of Hasakah National Hospital:</b> Supported installation of the hospital's desalination plant. The hospital is now utilizing all of its rehabilitated wards to treat patients and now has improved access to clean water and an additional supply of medical-grade oxygen.</p> <p><b>Essential Services Activity Planning:</b> Continued planning for anticipated COVID-19 vaccine awareness funding and food security (Ukraine Supplemental) funding. Worked with local health authorities and health organizations to design vaccine awareness activities.</p> <p><b>Establishment of Oxygen Bottling Plants:</b> Coordinated with local authorities to establish a new oxygen bottling plant in Raqqa and a second oxygen bottling plant in Dayr az Zawr to mitigate and treat the health impacts of COVID-19 in the region.</p>

Source: USAID Middle East Bureau, response to USAID OIG request for information, 9/23/2022.

## GOVERNANCE AND CIVIL SOCIETY

### Regime Withdraws from UNSCR 2254 Talks, Ninth Session Cancelled

State reported that the ninth round of the Constitutional Committee in Geneva, scheduled for late July, was cancelled when the Syrian regime withdrew its participants due to Russian pressure.<sup>452</sup>

State said that the United States continues to support UNSCR 2254 to achieve a political resolution to the crisis, including through the convening of the Constitutional Committee in Geneva. State said that the Syrian regime remains the “main obstacle” to progress and “should empower its delegates to negotiate in good faith” for the Syrian people.<sup>453</sup> The United States continues to support the UNSCR 2254 process additionally through State-managed programming that provides technical expertise and capacity building for select Constitutional Committee members.<sup>454</sup>

### Joint Statement on Syria Reaffirms Commitment to Political Process, Cross-Border Aid

In late August, representatives from the Arab League, Egypt, the European Union, France, Germany, Iraq, Jordan, Norway, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Türkiye, the United Kingdom, and the United States met in Geneva to discuss the crisis in Syria and to reaffirm their commitment to reaching a political solution to the Syrian crisis in line with UNSCR 2254. The group also reaffirmed continued support for implementing and sustaining an immediate nationwide ceasefire, the Constitutional Committee, free and fair elections, the end of arbitrary detention, and the release of all those unjustly held. The group reiterated the need to create secure conditions for the safe, dignified, and voluntary return of refugees and internally displaced persons and supported the provision of sufficient and sustainable aid to the displaced and their host countries and communities.<sup>455</sup>

The group also emphasized the importance of continuing life-saving humanitarian assistance and early recovery humanitarian assistance (intended to improve the resilience and independence of crisis-affected people by improving access to livelihoods and basic services) across Syria through expansion and extension of the UNSCR 2642 cross-border aid mechanism.<sup>456</sup> The international representatives also underlined the necessity to press for accountability for all atrocities and international crimes perpetrated in Syria, including the use of chemical weapons, and for a full accounting of the missing.<sup>457</sup>

## Sanctions Had Little Impact on Abuses Alleged Against Turkish-supported Opposition Groups

State said that “credible reporting” indicated that Turkish-supported opposition groups continued to commit human rights abuses in northeastern Syria.<sup>458</sup> These acts included abuses relating to detention, torture, rape, and deprivation of property of minority populations, particularly Kurds.<sup>459</sup> According to State, these abuses complicate the OIR mission by distracting the focus of the SDF from its defeat-ISIS mission.<sup>460</sup> A secondary effect is that ISIS is “better positioned to retain and recruit members” when the SDF’s focus is on protecting Kurdish populations from Turkish-supported opposition groups.<sup>461</sup>

State noted that although the U.S. Government sanctioned the Turkish-supported group, Ahrar al-Sharqiya, in July 2021, “there appears to have been little real impact” on Turkish supported opposition groups’ behavior.<sup>462</sup>

More information on Turkish-supported opposition groups can be found in the classified appendix to this report.

## SDF Recruitment of Child Soldiers Continued

In July, State released its 2022 Trafficking in Persons Report, which reported a “continuation in incidents of recruitment and use” of child soldiers by armed groups.<sup>463</sup> According to the report, the “Kurdish People’s Protection Units in northwest Syria continued to recruit, train, and use boys and girls as young as 12 years old.” The 2022 TIP report cites data through June 2022.<sup>464</sup> State did not provide updated information regarding the report’s claim that the SDF continued to recruit children.<sup>465</sup>

## State Programs Support Small Businesses, Training for Economic Recovery

State described the economic situation in northeastern Syria as difficult, with ongoing challenges that include high commodity price fluctuations, the continued devaluation of the Syrian pound, and reduced agricultural production due to drought.<sup>466</sup> These challenges have increased the overall need for both stabilization and humanitarian assistance funding in Syria over the past 2 years. State’s projects supporting civil society and education continued efforts to support emerging small businesses and entrepreneurs and provide technical and vocational training. The stabilization assistance and broader stabilization efforts are “vital to helping to accelerate inclusive economic recovery” in areas liberated from ISIS, State said.<sup>467</sup>

State said that “credible reporting” indicated that Turkish-supported opposition groups continued to commit human rights abuses in northeastern Syria.

**More than 90 percent of Syrians live in extreme poverty, and the humanitarian catastrophe remains among the largest in the world, with an estimated 14.6 million Syrians in need of humanitarian assistance.**

## HUMANITARIAN ASSISTANCE

More than 90 percent of Syrians live in extreme poverty, and the humanitarian catastrophe remains among the largest in the world, with an estimated 14.6 million Syrians in need of humanitarian assistance.<sup>468</sup> An estimated 12 million Syrians, approximately 60 percent of the population, are experiencing food insecurity due to conflict, the COVID-19 pandemic, historical levels of drought, and other economic shocks.<sup>469</sup> Russia's war in Ukraine further exacerbated the hunger crisis with rising food, fuel, and fertilizer prices.<sup>470</sup>

The USAID Bureau for Humanitarian Assistance (BHA) and the State Bureau of Population, Refugees, and Migration (PRM) fund organizations that provide emergency food assistance; health services; water, sanitation, and hygiene assistance; and shelter in Syria and to Syrian refugees living in neighboring countries. USAID BHA and State PRM also support psychosocial programs; case management and referral services; and other programs to children and vulnerable individuals.<sup>471</sup>

In addition, USAID and State maintain early recovery programs and activities that aim to reduce immediate and protracted humanitarian needs by strengthening the self-reliance of affected populations. State and USAID programs also improve individual, household, and community resilience, thereby reducing dependence on external assistance.<sup>472</sup> The programs are based on assessed humanitarian needs among vulnerable populations and implemented across Syria by independent and impartial humanitarian agencies.<sup>473</sup>

### U.S. Government Announces Additional \$756 Million in Humanitarian Assistance for Syrians

In September, the U.S. Government announced an additional \$756 million in humanitarian assistance for the Syrian people. The funding adds to the nearly \$808 million announced earlier in the year, bringing the U.S. Government's total contribution as the single largest donor to nearly \$15.7 billion since the beginning of the 11-year conflict. The funds benefit many of the 14.6 million people inside Syria and the 5.6 million Syrian refugees and host communities outside of the country.<sup>474</sup>

The additional funding is intended to meet urgent needs, including the purchase of food and other supplies from local markets, and nutritional products to prevent and treat undernutrition in children and pregnant women.<sup>475</sup> It also includes support for health facilities across northern Syria, including mobile health and nutrition teams to provide vaccinations and treatment, equipment for health facilities, and training for Syrian medical workers.<sup>476</sup>

### USAID Humanitarian Response Team Standing Down

The USAID BHA Middle East Crisis Humanitarian Response team was disbanded on September 16 after nearly 10 years of operations.<sup>477</sup> Management of BHA response efforts transitioned to a geographic team within BHA's Office of Middle East, North Africa, and Europe and as part of the U.S. Government's Syria Regional Platform.<sup>478</sup> According to BHA, this transition recognizes the long-term nature of the response to the situation in Syria and

Table 7.

**U.S. Government Funding Available for the Syria Humanitarian Response FY 2022**

SYRIA REGIONAL RESPONSE FY 2022			
	USAID BHA	State PRM	TOTAL
<b>TOTAL FUNDING</b>	<b>\$958,203,155</b>	<b>\$723,424,180</b>	<b>\$1,681,627,335</b>
<b>Includes support for refugee-hosting countries outside of Syria:</b>			
<b>Egypt</b>	\$18,000,000	\$41,414,294	<b>\$41,414,294</b>
<b>Iraq</b>	N/A*	\$16,400,000	<b>\$16,400,000</b>
<b>Jordan</b>	\$66,552,591	\$135,947,345	<b>\$202,499,936</b>
<b>Lebanon</b>	\$73,035,000	\$221,367,692	<b>\$294,402,692</b>
<b>Türkiye</b>	\$7,600,000	\$142,821,355	<b>\$150,421,355</b>
<b>Regional</b>	N/A	\$1,200,000	<b>\$1,200,000</b>

**Note:** \*USAID/BHA funding for Syrian refugees in Iraq is included in the Iraq Humanitarian Response funding total.

**Source:** USAID, "Syrian Complex Emergency Fact Sheet #10," 9/15/2022.

the need for a team to address the ongoing humanitarian crisis in Syria.<sup>479</sup> The change in management structure does not impact the locations and staffing footprints of BHA teams in Washington, D.C. or overseas.<sup>480</sup>

## Syria Declares a Major Cholera Outbreak

In September, the Ministry of Health in Syria declared a cholera outbreak in Syria.<sup>481</sup> Between August 25 and September 30, 10,039 suspected cases of cholera (acute watery diarrhea) were reported in 9 of Syria's 14 governorates.<sup>482</sup> More than half of the cases were reported from Dayr az Zawr governorate (56 percent), followed by Aleppo (22 percent), Raqqah (13 percent), and Hasakah (8 percent).<sup>483</sup> Health authorities and USAID partners assessed that the outbreak came from unsafe drinking water and contaminated irrigation water.<sup>484</sup> USAID reported that the outbreak indicated severe shortages of water throughout Syria, and said that much of the Syrian population relies on unsafe water sources due to drought-like conditions and the destruction of the national water infrastructure.<sup>485</sup> In response, the World Health Organization reported that it intensified surveillance activities.<sup>486</sup>

BHA also reported working with implementing partners to expand support for water, sanitation, and hygiene, in addition to health activities, to ensure access to safe water, hygiene packages and hygiene promotion, chlorination, and cholera treatment kits. BHA efforts also supported improving cholera awareness and capacity building of implementing partners and health personnel on the cholera disease.<sup>487</sup>

**Between August 25 and September 30, 10,039 suspected cases of cholera (acute watery diarrhea) were reported in 9 of Syria's 14 governorates**







A U.S. Air Force C-17A Globemaster III aircraft loadmaster measures the restraints on a U.S. Army M1A2 Abrams Main Battle Tank at Ali Al-Salem Air Base, Kuwait. (U.S. Air Force photo)

## OVERSIGHT ACTIVITIES

- 74 Strategic Planning
- 76 Audit, Inspection, and Evaluation Activity
- 80 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 oversight work related to audits, inspections, and evaluations; investigations; and hotline activities from July 1 through September 30, 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 2023 JOINT STRATEGIC OVERSIGHT PLAN ACTIVITIES

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

The *FY 2023 Joint Strategic Oversight Plan for OIR* was published on October 3, 2022, as part of the *FY 2023 Comprehensive Oversight Plan for Overseas Contingency Operations*. The *FY 2023 Joint Strategic Oversight Plan for OIR* is organized by three strategic oversight areas: 1) Military Operations and Security Cooperation; 2) 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, the Treasury, Energy, and Homeland Security, and of the Intelligence Community.

In August 2022, the Overseas Contingency Operations Joint Planning Group held its 59th meeting, with guest speaker Jedidiah Royal, Deputy Director of the Defense Security Cooperation Agency. Mr. Royal discussed his agency's role, major accomplishments, and challenges in supporting Ukraine.



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



## Lead IG Strategic Oversight Areas

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

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

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

### **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. State OIG staff in Baghdad and Frankfurt conducted oversight work of the Department of State's activities in Iraq and Syria. USAID OIG staff provided oversight of USAID activities in Syria and Iraq from their regional office in Frankfurt, supported by additional staff in Washington, D.C.

The Lead IG agencies and their partner agencies completed six reports related to OIR during the quarter. These reports examined various activities that support OIR, including lessons learned from previous DoD OIG and partner agencies' reports on U.S. security cooperation with foreign partners in Afghanistan, Iraq, and Africa; oversight of DoD funding to Vetted Syrian Opposition groups through the Counter-Islamic State of Iraq and Syria Train and Equip Fund; accountability for U.S. Government property at the U.S. Embassy in Baghdad; management of programs and operations of the U.S. Embassy in Kuwait; and the State Department's compliance with 11 State OIG recommendations made to the Bureau of Near Eastern Affairs in previous audits. Publicly releasable oversight reports are available online at the respective OIG's websites.

As of September 30, 2022, 8 projects related to OIR were ongoing and 4 projects related to OIR were planned.

### FINAL REPORTS BY LEAD IG AGENCIES

#### DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE OFFICE OF INSPECTOR GENERAL

##### ***Special Report: Lessons Learned From Security Cooperation Activities in Afghanistan, Iraq, and Africa***

DODIG-2022-142; September 29, 2022

This special report summarizes challenges and lessons learned in 37 reports issued from 2015 to 2021 by the DoD OIG, Government Accountability Office, and Special Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction, relating to U.S. and Coalition efforts to provide security cooperation to foreign partners in Afghanistan, Iraq, and Africa.

This report is intended to highlight the challenges and known lessons learned across a broad body of oversight reporting on the conduct of security cooperation activities. This special report may inform and assist current and future U.S. security cooperation activities worldwide. For example, problems with accountability and control of U.S.-provided equipment could result in loss of sensitive equipment that is susceptible to theft, misuse, or diversion.

Additionally, systemic challenges with training and advising resulted in partner nation over-reliance on U.S. and Coalition forces to execute essential functions, such as logistics, maintenance, and support. For example, one DoD OIG report determined that Iraqi trainees did not receive live-fire training on all weapon systems they were expected to use in combat, and another found that U.S. forces in Iraq were not able to account for night vision devices procured for and given to the Iraqi Security Forces. The DoD OIG did not make new recommendations in this report.

***Audit of Department of Defense Stipends Provided to the Vetted Syrian Opposition From the Counter Islamic State of Iraq and Syria Train and Equip Fund***

DODIG-2022-128; September 13, 2022

The DoD OIG conducted this audit 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. The report is classified. For more details, see the classified appendix to this report.

**DEPARTMENT OF STATE OFFICE OF INSPECTOR GENERAL**

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

AUD-MERO-22-44; September 20, 2022

State OIG conducted this audit to determine whether the U.S. Embassy in Baghdad, Iraq had implemented internal controls to account for and manage the life cycle of nonexpendable personal property in accordance with Federal requirements and Department of State regulations.

As of July 2022, the embassy managed approximately \$164 million worth of U.S. Government nonexpendable personal property, including vehicles, furniture, equipment, appliances, and machinery. State OIG conducted this audit to determine whether the embassy implemented internal controls to account for and manage the life cycle of nonexpendable personal property in accordance with U.S. Government and Department of State requirements. Nonexpendable personal property is defined as U.S. Government-owned or leased assets that are not otherwise classified as land, land improvement, buildings, and structures that are normally referred to as real property.

State OIG determined that the embassy had implemented key internal controls to account for and manage the life cycle of nonexpendable personal property. However, State OIG found that the embassy did not consistently or completely apply all internal controls and did not use all available analytic tools to manage nonexpendable property. Specifically, State OIG found that the embassy did not include all accountable property in its annual inventories and discontinued some property spot checks. In addition, the embassy did not always promptly dispose of property or secure access to the destruction yard holding area. Further, the embassy did not always promptly complete the receiving process or promptly update the locations of items in the inventory database. Finally, the embassy did not fully utilize analytical tools when purchasing or replacing property. These shortcomings occurred

because—while it encountered unique staffing challenges from FY 2019 to FY 2022—the embassy did not always develop, implement, document, and clearly communicate procedures for managing some elements of the property life cycle.

State OIG made 14 recommendations to improve the management of nonexpendable personal property by the embassy. In response to a draft of this report, the embassy and the Bureau of Administration, respectively, concurred with all 14 recommendations, and State OIG considered all 14 recommendations resolved pending further action at the time the report was issued.

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

ISP-S-22-24; September 20, 2022

State OIG conducted an inspection to evaluate the programs and operations of the U.S. Embassy in Kuwait City, Kuwait, and issued a classified annex to the main report. For more details, see the classified appendix to this report. A publicly available report is forthcoming.

### ***Audit of Cooperative Agreements and Grants Related to Iran***

AUD-MERO-22-32; August 22, 2022

State OIG conducted this audit to determine whether cooperative agreements and grants awarded by the Department of State to counter Iranian initiatives align with the department's strategic goals and objectives. Additionally, State OIG determined whether the Department of State monitored and administered the agreements and grants in accordance with Federal requirements, policies and guidance, and award terms and conditions. The report is classified. For more details, see the classified appendix to this report.

### ***Management Assistance Report: Support From the Under Secretary for Political Affairs Is Needed To Facilitate the Closure of Recommendations Addressed to the Bureau of Near Eastern Affairs***

AUD-AOQC-22-33; August 2, 2022

State OIG issued this management assistance report to bring to the attention of the State Department Under Secretary for Political Affairs (Under Secretary) open recommendations from previous audits.

As of March 31, 2022, 11 recommendations made to the Bureau of Near Eastern Affairs (the Bureau) in 6 State OIG audit reports were overdue for compliance response and remained open. Compliance responses from the Bureau were 197 days or more overdue for 4 of 6 reports, including 1 response that was 310 days late. In addition to the delinquent correspondence, 9 of 11 recommendations were open for more than 1,000 days (nearly 3 years), with 2 recommendations reaching nearly 2,000 days (more than 5 years). Finally, prior compliance correspondence from the Bureau for 10 of the 11 recommendations did not include detailed action plans and specific estimated milestones for implementation, as required.

The six reports addressed concern deficiencies related to the Bureau’s implementation of policies to counter violent extremism, the invoice review process used by the Bureau to support contingency operations in Iraq, food service contracts in Iraq, and the Bureau’s management of contract oversight in Iraq.

In this report, in furtherance of the goal of closing the prior reports’ recommendations, State OIG made two new recommendations to the Under Secretary for Political Affairs. In response to a draft of this report, the Under Secretary concurred with both recommendations and State OIG considered both recommendations resolved pending further action at the time the report was issued.

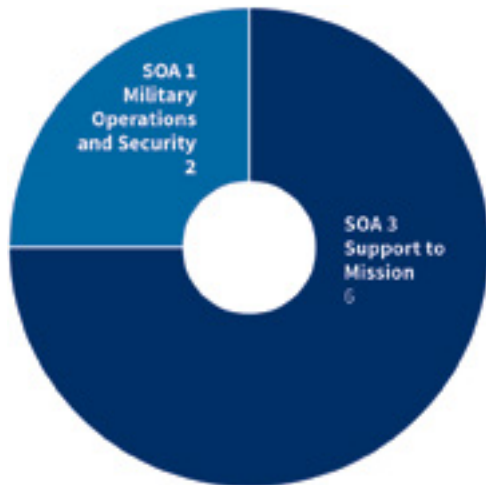
## ONGOING OVERSIGHT ACTIVITIES

As of September 30, 2022, the Lead IG agencies and their partner agencies had eight ongoing projects related to OIR. Figure 8 describes the ongoing projects by strategic oversight area.

Table 8, contained in Appendix F, lists the titles and objectives for each of these projects. The following sections highlight some of these ongoing projects by strategic oversight area.

Figure 8.

### Ongoing Projects by Strategic Oversight Area



### Military Operations and Security Cooperation

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

### Support to Mission

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

## PLANNED OVERSIGHT PROJECTS

As of September 30, 2022, the Lead IG agencies and their partner agencies had four planned projects related to OIR. Figure 9 describes the planned projects by strategic oversight area.

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

### Governance, Humanitarian Assistance, and Development

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

### Support to Mission

- The **DoD OIG** intends to evaluate the effectiveness of military deception planning in support of ongoing OIR operations.
- **State OIG** intends to conduct an audit to determine whether the U.S. Embassy in Baghdad and the Bureau of Overseas Buildings Operations developed and maintained planning documents for embassy facilities, as required by Department of State policy.

Figure 9.

### Planned Projects by Strategic Oversight Area



## INVESTIGATIONS AND HOTLINE ACTIVITY

### INVESTIGATIONS

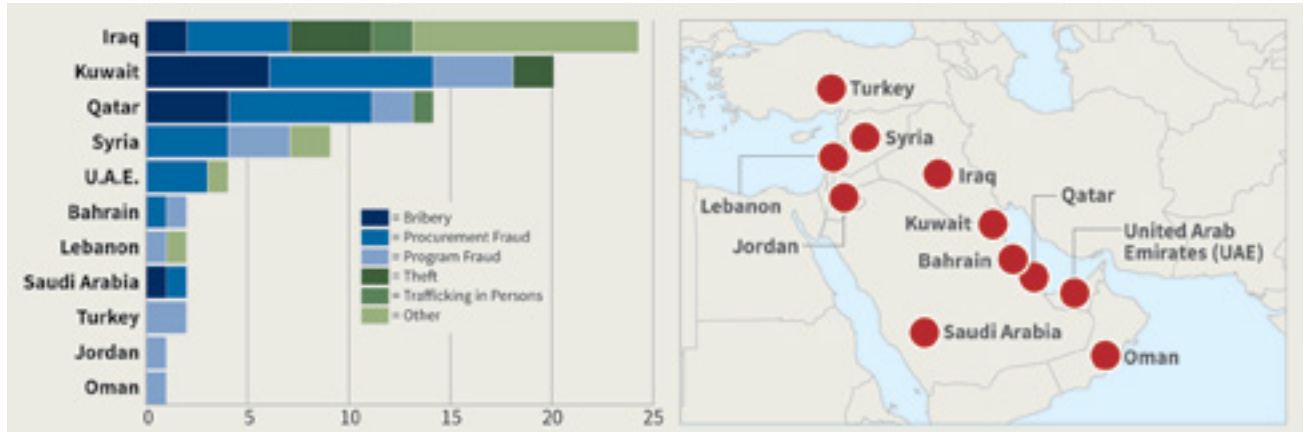
The investigative components of the Lead IG agencies and their partner agencies continued to conduct investigative activity related to OIR during the quarter. However, COVID-19 limitations led to a decrease in the overall number of open investigations. The DoD OIG's criminal investigative component,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

### Investigative Activity Related To OIR

During the quarter, the investigative branches of the Lead IG agencies and their partner agencies closed 17 investigations, initiated 5 investigations, and coordinated on 72 open investigations. The open investigations involve grant and procurement fraud, corruption, theft, program irregularities, computer intrusions, and human trafficking allegations. As noted in Figure 10, the majority of primary offense locations and allegations related to OIR originated in Iraq, Kuwait, and Qatar.

Figure 10.

**Types of Allegations and Primary Offense Locations, July 1, 2022–September 30, 2022**

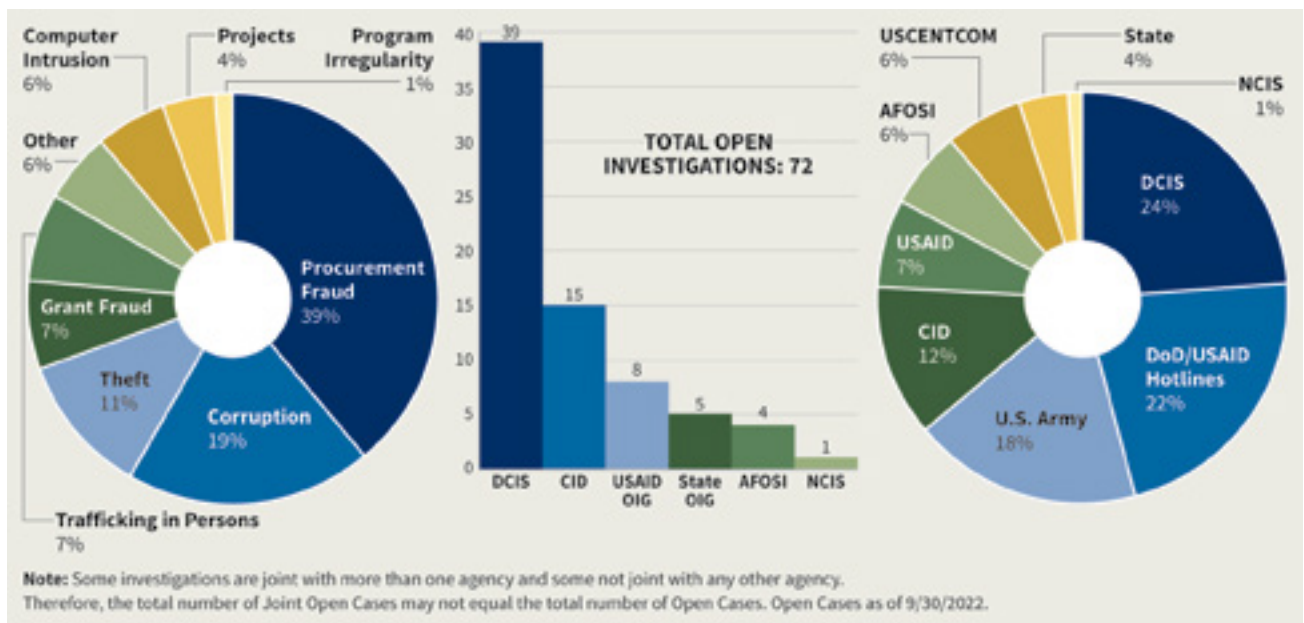


The Lead IG agencies and partners continued to coordinate their investigative efforts through the Fraud and Corruption Investigative Working Group, which consists of representatives from DCIS, State OIG, USAID OIG, the U.S. Army Criminal Investigation Division (CID), the Naval Criminal Investigative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

Figure 11 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 793 participants.

Figure 11.

**Open Investigations and Sources of Allegations, July 1, 2022–September 30, 2022**



## Investigative Activity Related to Legacy Cases

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

### HOTLINE

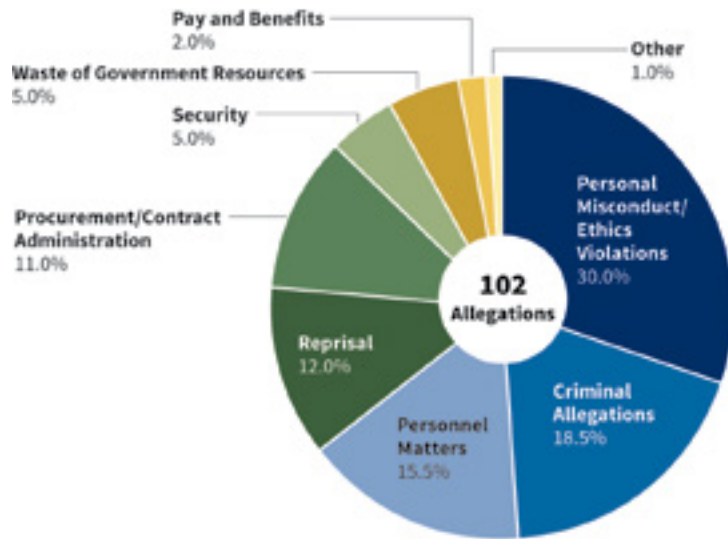
Each Lead IG agency maintains its own hotline to receive complaints specific to its agency. The hotlines provide a confidential, reliable means for individuals to report violations of law, rule, or regulation; mismanagement; gross waste of funds; or abuse of authority. A DoD OIG Hotline investigator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

During the quarter, the DoD OIG Hotline investigator received 102 allegations and referred 69 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 12, the majority of allegations during the reporting period related to personal misconduct (ethical violations), criminal allegations, personnel matters, reprisal, and procurement and contract administration.

Figure 12.

#### Hotline Activities











**U.S. Army CH-47 Chinook helicopters take off for an OIR mission in the U.S. Central Command area of operations. (U.S. Army photo)**

## APPENDICES

- 86 Appendix A:  
Classified Appendix to this Report
- 86 Appendix B:  
About the Lead Inspector General
- 87 Appendix C:  
Methodology for Preparing this  
Lead IG Quarterly Report
- 88 Appendix D:  
Department of Justice  
Prosecutions and Activities Against  
Terrorism
- 91 Appendix E:  
Department of the Treasury and  
Department of State Actions  
Against Terrorist Financing
- 92 Appendix F:  
Ongoing Oversight Projects
- 93 Appendix G:  
Planned Oversight Projects
- 94 Acronyms
- 95 Endnotes

## APPENDIX A

# Classified Appendix to this Report

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

## APPENDIX B

# About the Lead Inspector General

Section 8L of the Inspector General Act established the Lead Inspector General (Lead IG) framework for oversight of overseas contingency operations. The primary Lead IG agencies are the Offices of Inspector General (OIG) of the Department of Defense (DoD), the Department of State (State), and the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID).

Section 8L requires the Council of Inspectors General on Integrity and Efficiency to appoint a Lead Inspector General from among the inspectors general of the primary Lead IG agencies upon the commencement or designation of a military operation that exceeds 60 days as an overseas contingency operation; or receipt of notification thereof.

Lead IG oversight of the operation “sunset” at the end of the first fiscal year after commencement or designation in which the total amount appropriated for the operation is less than \$100,000,000.

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

- Submit to Congress on a quarterly basis a report on the contingency operation and to make that report available to the public.
- Develop a joint strategic plan to conduct comprehensive oversight of the operation.
- Ensure independent and effective oversight of programs and operations of the U.S. Government in support of the operation through either joint or individual audits, inspections, investigations, and evaluations.

Inspector General Act of 1978, Public Law 95-452, Section 8L, as amended. 10 U.S.C. § 101(a)(13), 10 U.S.C. §113(o), 22 U.S.C. §2421f, subsection (e).

## APPENDIX C

# 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. State IG is the Associate IG for the operation.

This report covers the period from July 1 through September 30, 2022. The three Lead IG agencies—DoD OIG, State OIG, and USAID OIG—and partner oversight agencies contributed the content of this report.

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

### INFORMATION COLLECTION FROM AGENCIES AND OPEN SOURCES

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

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

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

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

### REPORT PRODUCTION

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

## APPENDIX D

# Department of Justice Prosecutions and Activities Against Terrorism

Since 2014, the Department of Justice (DoJ) has charged more than 220 individuals with international terrorism-related conduct relating to ISIS, and obtained more than 170 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 July 1 through September 30, 2022:

- **On July 7, 2022, in the Middle District of Florida, Romeo Xavier Langhorne** was sentenced to 20 years in prison and 15 years of supervised release. On May 13, 2021, Langhorne pleaded guilty to one count of attempting to provide material support to ISIS. According to court documents, Langhorne pledged his allegiance to ISIS at some point in 2014, knowing that ISIS was a designated foreign terrorist organization that engaged in acts of terrorism. Between 2018 and 2019, Langhorne reaffirmed his support of ISIS on various social media accounts, posted ISIS-produced videos to his YouTube account and participated in online ISIS chat rooms with like-minded individuals. In December 2018 and January 2019, Langhorne expressed in one of those chat rooms an interest in creating a video that would improve on existing videos demonstrating the making and use of a deadly explosive.
- **On July 29, 2022, in the Eastern District of Virginia, Mohammed Khalifa** was sentenced to life imprisonment and 20 years of supervised release. On December 10, 2021, Khalifa pleaded guilty to conspiring to provide material support or resources to ISIS. According to court documents, Khalifa served in prominent roles within ISIS starting in 2013 and continuing until his capture by the Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) in January 2019. In addition to serving as a fighter and personally executing two Syrian soldiers on behalf of ISIS, Khalifa served as a lead translator in ISIS's propaganda production and the English-speaking narrator on multiple violent ISIS videos. In the spring of 2013, Khalifa traveled to Syria with the intent of becoming a foreign fighter and ultimately joining ISIS. In or around November 2013, he joined ISIS and swore allegiance to then-ISIS leader Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi. In early 2014, he was recruited to join ISIS's media department due, in part, to his language abilities as a fluent English and Arabic speaker. Starting in 2016, Khalifa directed various supporter networks that assisted in the translation, production and dissemination of propaganda released under various ISIS media brands in order to reach Western audiences. He worked within the ISIS media operation until late 2018. The productions narrated by Khalifa include two of the most influential and exceptionally violent ISIS propaganda videos: "Flames of War: Fighting Has Just Begun" and "Flames of War II: Until the Final Hour."
- **On August 19, 2022, in the Eastern District of Virginia, El Shafee Elsheikh** was sentenced to life imprisonment. On April 14, 2022, a federal jury convicted Elsheikh, a militant fighter for ISIS, on all eight charges brought against him in the United States. On

April 29, 2022, co-conspirator Alexandra Amon Kotey was sentenced to life in prison after pleading guilty in September 2021 to all charges in the indictment. According to court records, from November 2012 through February 7, 2015, the co-conspirators served as ISIS fighters and participated in the captivity of hostages, to include American citizens—James Wright Foley, Kayla Jean Mueller, Steven Joel Sotloff, and Peter Edward Kassig—each of whom died as hostages in ISIS custody. The co-conspirators and another ISIS member supervised the terrorist organization’s jails and detention facilities and were responsible for transferring hostages between detention facilities. The co-conspirators engaged in a prolonged pattern of physical and psychological violence against hostages meant as an effort to control the hostages. These actions intended to compel the victims’ family members and the U.S. Government to pay large monetary ransoms for their release, in addition to compelling the U.S. Government to agree to other terms and conditions for the victims’ return. In addition to physically and psychologically abusing the hostages, the co-conspirators participated in forcibly exposing the hostages to the murder of other hostages held by ISIS.

- **On August 26, 2022, in the Eastern District of New York, Awais Ali Chudhary** pleaded guilty to attempting to provide material support to ISIS. According to court filings, in August 2019, after watching violent terrorist propaganda videos, Chudhary pledged his allegiance to ISIS’s then-leader Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi and began planning for a knife or bomb attack as an ISIS supporter. Chudhary identified targets, including the pedestrian bridges over the Grand Central Parkway and the Flushing Bay Promenade, where he intended to carry out the attacks. He sought guidance from individuals whom he believed to be ISIS supporters, including what type of knife to use and how to prevent detection from law enforcement by not leaving “traces of fingerprints [or] DNA.” Chudhary conducted several reconnaissance trips to the areas he intended to attack and ordered items online that he intended to use to commit a terrorist attack, including a tactical knife, a mask, gloves, and a cellphone chest and head strap—to facilitate his recording of the attack, which he hoped would serve as inspiration to other ISIS supporters.
- **On September 9, 2022, in the Southern District of New York, James Bradley** pleaded guilty to attempting to provide material support to ISIS. On September 12, 2022, Bradley’s wife, Arwa Muthana pleaded guilty to the same charge. According to court documents, Bradley and Muthana are ISIS supporters who attempted to travel to the Middle East to join and fight for ISIS. Bradley expressed violent extremist views since at least 2019, including his desire to support ISIS by traveling overseas to join the group or committing a terrorist attack in the United States. In May 2020, he expressed to an undercover law enforcement officer his desire to conduct a terrorist attack in the United States and discussed potentially attacking the U.S. Military Academy in West Point, New York. Bradley explained that if he could not leave the United States, he would do “something” in the United States instead, referring to carrying out an attack. In late January 2021, he married Muthana in an Islamic marriage ceremony. Beginning before and continuing after their marriage, Bradley and Muthana discussed, planned, and ultimately attempted to travel to the Middle East together to join and fight with ISIS. In or about early March 2021, Bradley traveled from New York to Alabama to visit Muthana, and he and Muthana traveled back to New York together, to travel from New York to join ISIS. Thereafter, Bradley raised the possibility of the undercover officer helping him and Muthana get on a cargo ship to travel to Asia or Africa for the purpose of ultimately joining and fighting for ISIS.

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

The DoJ's Justice Attaché engaged Iraqi security and legal partners on counterterrorism matters, including the Chief Justice, President of the Supreme Judicial Council, the Iraqi implementer of state counterterrorism programming, the Deputy National Security Advisor, the Ninewa Terrorism Court Chief Judge, and the Karkh Commercial Court. The Justice Attaché will continue to engage on training and capacity building. 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 State Department, 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.

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

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



## APPENDIX E

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

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

### DEPARTMENT OF THE TREASURY DESIGNATIONS AND ACTIVITIES

Since 2014, the Secretary of the Treasury has designated 109 individuals and entities providing support to ISIS pursuant to Executive Order 13224. The Secretary of the Treasury did not sanction any individuals or organizations for providing support to ISIS this quarter. No individuals or organizations sanctioned for providing support to ISIS were removed from the sanctions list during the quarter.

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

Treasury continued to work with interagency and Coalition partners, including the Iraqi government, to prioritize identifying ISIS's financial reserves and financial leaders, disrupting its financial facilitation networks in Iraq, and designating ISIS facilitators, front companies, and fundraisers in Iraq, Syria, Türkiye, and elsewhere. Treasury also takes a leadership role in the Global Coalition to Defeat ISIS, serving as a co-lead of the Counter ISIS Finance Group along with its counterparts from Italy and Saudi Arabia. On May 9, 2022, Treasury co-led a Counter ISIS Finance Group meeting in Morocco with dozens of Coalition members and observers, including Iraqi partners, to exchange information on ISIS financing activities and the efforts to counter these activities across multiple continents.

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 Türkiye to transfer funds internationally. ISIS supporters also use virtual currencies and online fundraising platforms to transfer funds, including to internally displaced persons camps. 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

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

## APPENDIX F

# Ongoing Oversight Projects

Table 8 lists the titles and objectives for Lead IG ongoing oversight projects related to OIR.

Table 8.

### Ongoing Oversight Projects Related to OIR by Lead IG Agency, as of September 30, 2022

#### DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE OFFICE OF INSPECTOR GENERAL

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

#### DEPARTMENT OF STATE OFFICE OF INSPECTOR GENERAL

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

To evaluate the programs and operations of the U.S. Embassy in Kuwait City, Kuwait.

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

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

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

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

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

## APPENDIX G

# Planned Oversight Projects

Table 9 lists the titles and objectives for Lead IG planned oversight projects.

Table 9.

### Planned Projects Related to OIR by Lead IG Agency, as of September 30, 2022

#### DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE OFFICE OF INSPECTOR GENERAL

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

To determine the extent to which the combatant commands have effectively conducted military deception (MILDEC) planning in the U.S. Africa Command and U.S. Central Command, areas of responsibility, to include in support of ongoing OIR operations.

#### DEPARTMENT OF STATE OFFICE OF INSPECTOR GENERAL

##### ***Audit of Facilities Planning at U.S. Embassy Baghdad, Iraq***

To determine whether the U.S. Embassy in Baghdad, Iraq, and the Bureau of Overseas Buildings Operations developed and maintained planning documents for embassy facilities, as required by Department of State policy.

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

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

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

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

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

## ACRONYMS

Acronym	
BHA	USAID Bureau for Humanitarian Assistance
CID	U.S. Army Criminal Investigations Division
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
DCIS	Defense Criminal Investigative Service
DIA	Defense Intelligence Agency
DoD	Department of Defense
DoJ	Department of Justice
FBI	Federal Bureau of Investigation
FIIA	Federal Intelligence and Investigations Administration
FY	fiscal year
GCC	Gulf Cooperation Council
HIMARS	High Mobility Artillery Rocket Systems
IALO	Iraqi Air Liaison Officer
IDP	internally displaced person
IED	improvised explosive device
IOM	International Organization for Migration
IqAAC	Iraqi Army Aviation Command
ISF	Iraqi Security Forces
ISIS	ISIS Islamic State of Iraq and Syria
ISR	intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance
ITAC	Iraqi Tactical Air Controller
JIOC	Joint Information Operations Center
JOC-I	Joint Operations Command–Iraq
KCL	Kurdistan Coordination Line
KRG	Kurdistan Regional Government

Acronym	
Lead IG Agencies	The DoD, State OIG, and USAID OIGs
MAG	Military Advisory Group
MaT	Mughawir al-Thawra
MoD	Ministry of Defense
Mol	Ministry of Interior
MoPA	Ministry of Peshmerga Affairs
MSS	Mission Support Site
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organization
NGO	non-governmental organization
NMI	NATO Mission-Iraq
OC	operations command
ODASD(ME)	Office of the Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for the Middle East
OIG	Office of Inspector General
OIR	Operation Inherent Resolve
OSC-I	Office of Security Cooperation–Iraq
PKK	Kurdistan Workers’ Party
PMC	Popular Mobilization Committee
PRM	State Bureau of Population, Refugees, and Migration
SDF	Syrian Democratic Forces
SOAG	Special Operations Advisory Group
State	Department of State
Treasury	Department of the Treasury
UAV	unmanned aerial vehicle
UN	United Nations
UNSCR	UN Security Council Resolution
USAID	U.S. Agency for International Development
USCENTCOM	The U.S. Central Command
USEUCOM	The U.S. European Command

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