

LEAD INSPECTOR GENERAL REPORT TO THE UNITED STATES CONGRESS



OPERATION INHERENT RESOLVE

AND OTHER U.S. GOVERNMENT ACTIVITIES RELATED TO

IRAQ & SYRIA



JANUARY 1, 2025–MARCH 31, 2025



On the cover: A U.S. Army flight crew chief completes safety checks on a CH-47 Chinook helicopter prior to a flight in Erbil, Iraq.
(U.S. Army photo)



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

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

This quarterly report describes the activities of the U.S. Government in support of OIR as well as the work of the Department of Defense (DoD), the Department of State (State), and the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) to further the U.S. Government's policy goals in Iraq and Syria during the period of January 1 through March 31, 2025. This report also discusses the planned, ongoing, and completed oversight work conducted by the Lead IG agencies—the DoD, State, and USAID OIGs—and our partner oversight agencies.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Steven A. Stebbins".

Steven A. Stebbins
Acting Lead Inspector General
for OIR
Acting Inspector General
U.S. Department of Defense

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Sandra J. Lewis".

Sandra J. Lewis
Acting Associate Inspector General
for OIR
Acting Inspector General
U.S. Department of State

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Toayoa Aldridge".

Toayoa Aldridge
Acting Deputy Inspector General
Performing the Duties of
the Inspector General
U.S. Agency for International
Development





An Apache helicopter returns from a mission at Erbil Air Base, Iraq. (U.S. Army photo)

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

On January 20, President Donald J. Trump issued an executive order for an immediate 90-day pause on U.S. foreign assistance pending a review of all programs.¹ As a result, most State and USAID foreign assistance programs in Syria and Iraq came to a halt.² Some programs, particularly those that provide life-saving humanitarian assistance, continued under a waiver.³ As of the end of the quarter, it was unclear how many assistance programs in Syria and Iraq had been terminated. While some State and USAID offices provided information about the status of individual programs, others declined citing the pending issuance of the foreign assistance review final report.⁴

During the assistance pause, the U.S.-funded implementer that manages al-Hol and Roj camps temporarily suspended activities and withdrew the camps' administrative staff.⁵ The implementer resumed operations a few days later under a waiver, and the camps remained relatively calm.⁶ Meanwhile, the assistance pause and terminations of USAID programming further increased pressure on Iraq to repatriate its nationals from the camps.⁷ More than 1,500 households moved to the Jeddah 1 transit camp in Iraq.⁸ The United States continued to urge other countries to expeditiously repatriate their displaced and detained nationals who remain in the region.⁹

Coalition Mine
Resistant Ambush
Protected vehicle
crew members
perform security
operations in
northern Syria.
(U.S. Army photo)




While the U.S. Government does not recognize the new authorities in Damascus, the SDF and the SFA, both Coalition partners, separately signed preliminary agreements to integrate with the interim authorities.

U.S. and Iraqi forces killed the ISIS chief of global operations amid an increased tempo in counter-ISIS operations in Iraq and Syria.¹⁰ Meanwhile, ISIS held nearly \$10 million in reserves and continued to rely on virtual assets to fundraise and transfer funds to finance its operations.¹¹ The group seeks to exploit instability in Syria following the fall of the Bashar al-Assad regime in December 2024.¹²

Syria's new interim authorities began to consolidate power after toppling the Assad regime. The interim authorities reformed into a more inclusive body, while continuing to face pockets of resistance, particularly from Assad loyalists in western Syria.¹³ While the U.S. Government does not recognize the new authorities in Damascus, the Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) and the Syrian Free Army (SFA), both Coalition partners, separately signed preliminary agreements to integrate their forces into the interim authorities.¹⁴ The SFA agreed to join the interim Syrian authorities security forces, while the SDF agreement launched negotiations on a deal that includes an SDF handover of civil and military institutions including border crossings, an airport, and oil fields to the interim authorities.¹⁵

Coalition forces continued to partner with the SDF during operations against ISIS. The SDF conducted counter-ISIS operations despite attacks by Türkiye and groups that Türkiye supports, ongoing tensions with Arab tribes, and the rapidly changing security environment.¹⁶ Long-term U.S. support to the SDF and SFA through the Counter-ISIS Train and Equip Fund (CTEF) remained in place.¹⁷





A U.S. Army military working dog handler and his dog provide security during a visit to the Rukban Police Department in Syria. (U.S. Army photo)

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MISSION UPDATE

INTRODUCTION

The Operation Inherent Resolve (OIR) mission is to advise, assist, and enable partner forces until they can independently maintain the enduring defeat of ISIS in Iraq and designated areas of Syria, and to set conditions for long-term security cooperation frameworks with partners in those countries.¹⁸

Combined Joint Task Force–Operation Inherent Resolve (CJTF-OIR), which comprises troops from 22 countries, executes the OIR campaign.¹⁹ CJTF-OIR is part of the 89-member Global Coalition to Defeat ISIS, led by the United States.²⁰

During the quarter, the OIR campaign plan was under review.²¹ The current campaign plan outlines decisive conditions and conditions-based milestones against which to measure the mission’s progress. Specifically, this assessment framework contains milestones to transition OIR activities into a long-term security framework.²²

In addition to military activity under OIR, the U.S. Government pursues several policy goals in Iraq and Syria that, while not directly a part of the OIR mission, are integral to the success of the OIR campaign. During the quarter, U.S. Government policy toward Iraq and Syria was under review.²³

U.S. Government Announces Foreign Assistance Pause and Review, Terminates Many Programs

On January 20, the White House issued Executive Order 14169, “Reevaluating and Realigning United States Foreign Aid,” which placed an immediate 90-day pause on U.S. foreign aid.²⁴ During the pause, Secretary of State Marco Rubio, in consultation with the Director of the Office of Management and Budget, provided guidelines to agency heads to review their programs for efficiency and consistency with U.S. foreign policy, and determine whether to continue, modify, or cease each foreign assistance program.²⁵

Secretary Rubio and State’s Director of Foreign Assistance directed every State and USAID bureau, office, or other entity providing any type of foreign assistance to produce a list of all active, pending, and proposed grants, subgrants, contracts, and subcontracts, as well as an explanation of how the current or proposed use of obligated funds advances the President’s policy.²⁶

Stop-work orders: The Secretary’s guidance directed contracting and grants officers to issue temporary stop-work orders pending the results of the review.²⁷ Most State and USAID foreign assistance programs in Syria and Iraq came to a halt, as did third-party monitoring of these programs.²⁸ The order paused new obligations and disbursements for foreign development assistance funds to foreign countries and implementing non-governmental organizations, international organizations, and contractors.²⁹

On January 20, the White House issued Executive Order 14169, “Reevaluating and Realigning United States Foreign Aid,” which placed an immediate 90-day pause on U.S. foreign aid.



A U.S. Air Force F-15E Strike Eagle conducts a combat air patrol in support of OIR over the U.S. Central Command area of responsibility. (U.S. Air Force photo)

Waivers: On January 24, Secretary Rubio authorized waivers to allow emergency food assistance, as well as expenses necessary to administer such assistance, prior expenses incurred under existing awards or legitimate expenses associated with stop-work orders, and exceptions to the pause approved by State's Director of Foreign Assistance.³⁰ Subsequent guidance expanded the authorization to request waivers to include life-saving humanitarian assistance, including medicine, medical services, food, shelter, subsistence assistance, and repatriation of third-country nationals.³¹ Foreign assistance for DoD-implemented Foreign Military Financing and International Military Education and Training programs also continued under waivers.³²

According to State, the temporary waivers did not reflect a final Administration view on whether a particular program should ultimately be retained or terminated; these waivers were designed to continue certain programs while they conducted the broad review.³³

On March 10, Secretary Rubio announced that State was canceling 5,200 USAID awards—83 percent of USAID programs.³⁴ On March 19, State announced that it had completed its review of all foreign assistance programs.³⁵ From that date forward, State-funded foreign assistance programs no longer required exceptions or waivers and were authorized to rescind stop-work orders and suspensions for paused programs.³⁶

While some State and USAID offices provided information about the status of individual programs, others declined noting that, until completion of a final report on the foreign assistance review, individual program status is unavailable.³⁷ Further details about affected programs including information about whether programs were active, had been terminated, or were pending waivers—are available on pages 16 and 17 (Syria) and pages 37 through 39 (Iraq).

In addition to the foreign assistance pause, the White House issued other executive orders that impacted foreign assistance in Syria and Iraq. (See Table 1.) A pair of executive orders

On March 10, Secretary Rubio announced that State was canceling 5,200 USAID awards—83 percent of USAID programs.

Table 1.

Executive Orders Relevant to OIR Programs

E.O. 14169 Reevaluating and Realigning United States Foreign Aid January 20, 2025	Instituted a “90-day pause on U.S. foreign development assistance for assessment of programmatic efficiencies and consistency with U.S. foreign policy”; paused new obligations and disbursements of development assistance funds to foreign countries, NGOs, international organizations and contractors.
E.O. 14155 Withdrawing the United States from the World Health Organization January 20, 2025	Withdrew the United States from the WHO; paused all U.S. Government funds, support, or resources to the WHO; ordered recall of U.S. government personnel and contractors; ordered identification of “credible and transparent U.S. partners” to assume necessary WHO activities.
E.O. 14199 Withdrawing the United States from and Ending Funding to Certain United Nations Organizations and Reviewing United States Support to All International Organizations February 10, 2025	Withdrew the United States from and ended funding for the UN Human Rights Council; ended funding for UNWRA; ordered a Secretary of State review of U.S. membership in UNESCO; ordered review of “all international intergovernmental organizations of which the United States is a member and provides any type of funding or other support, and all conventions and treaties to which the United States is a party.”

Sources: White House, “Executive Order 14169—Reevaluating and Realigning United States Foreign Aid,” 1/20/2025; White House, “Executive Order 14155—Withdrawing the United States from the World Health Organization,” 1/20/2025; White House, “Executive Order 14199—Withdrawing the United States from and Ending Funding to Certain United Nations Organizations and Reviewing United States Support to All International Organizations,” 2/10/2025.

withdrew the United States from the World Health Organization (WHO)—through which the international community, including the United States, had previously delivered foreign assistance—and the UN Human Rights Council.³⁸ State said that it complied with the executive orders and terminated all humanitarian assistance awards to, and has ceased all bilateral interaction with, the WHO, though the United States will remain a member of the WHO until January 2026.³⁹ State said that it has engaged an internal process to identify credible and transparent partners globally to assume activities previously undertaken by the WHO.⁴⁰

Assistance Pause Immediately Impacts Programs in Syria and Iraq

The rapid implementation of the pause, reductions in USAID staffing, and inability to communicate directly with implementers led to confusion within USAID regarding which programs were subject to the pause. Guidance about which programs were authorized to request waivers and the information required to apply for those waivers changed frequently. USAID issued guidance on stop-work orders directly to implementers; USAID staff in some cases initially learned about some stop-work orders and terminations from their implementers rather than USAID.⁴¹ In addition, USAID BHA reported that guidance about which programs were authorized to request waivers and the information required to apply for those waivers changed frequently.⁴²

The pause also resulted in the freezing of payments to implementing partners for both work already completed and advance payment for ongoing work.⁴³ As a result, some U.S.-funded construction activities paused, leaving work unfinished and already-purchased equipment uninstalled. Many partners paused operations and the delivery of life-saving humanitarian

assistance, and, in some cases, terminated staff and closed offices, according to USAID BHA.⁴⁴ As a result, some implementing partners may need to stop operating entirely.⁴⁵

USAID's Middle East Bureau reported that as of the end of the quarter, it was unclear what costs and savings were associated with the assistance pause. Many terminated activities include contractually obligated closeout costs, including payment for property leases, equipment purchased, staff salaries, fees, penalties for early termination, and settlement negotiations with implementers.⁴⁶

At the same time, USAID operated with a reduced workforce following a February 4 directive that placed many staff on administrative leave and ordered many overseas staff to return home within 30 days. Skeleton teams worked to coordinate responses and the process for essential staff designations, the repatriation of foreign service officers, and personal service contractors.⁴⁷

On March 28, the USAID Deputy Administrator informed staff that non-statutory positions would be terminated by September 2025, and that USAID would begin a multi-step process to merge with State.⁴⁸ As of the end of the quarter, State had not assumed responsibility for administering USAID programs or operations in Iraq.⁴⁹

THE ISIS THREAT

U.S. and Iraqi Forces Kill ISIS Chief of Global Operations

In March, U.S. and Iraqi forces killed Abdullah Makki Muslih al-Rifa'i, the ISIS chief of global operations, in a targeted airstrike in Iraq's Anbar province.⁵⁰ The U.S. Central Command (USCENTCOM) said al-Rifa'i was the leader of ISIS's highest decision-making body, responsible for logistics, planning, and finances of ISIS's global operations.⁵¹ CJTF-OIR said that al-Rifa'i's death "probably will hinder ISIS's ability to plan and conduct attacks in Iraq and Syria in the coming 1 to 3 months."⁵²

The operation against al-Rifa'i occurred during a period of increased counter-ISIS military operations that began in August 2024, according to CJTF-OIR.⁵³ Those operations sought to mitigate the effects of events that ISIS could exploit including U.S. plans to reposition

On March 13, U.S. and Iraqi forces killed Abdullah Makki Muslih al-Rifa'i the ISIS chief of global operations and one other ISIS operative in a precision airstrike in Iraq's Anbar province. (DoD video captures)



U.S. forces in Iraq and the December 2024 collapse of the Assad regime and subsequent instability in Syria.⁵⁴

The Defense Intelligence Agency (DIA) reported that the increased operations in Iraq resulted in the deaths of more than 50 ISIS members and detention of several ISIS members this quarter, including some who were involved in the group's military manufacturing efforts. The DIA assessed that the consistent military pressure probably will constrain ISIS's ability to operate and plan attacks in Iraq.⁵⁵ Operations by the SDF against ISIS in Syria's Raqqah and Dayr az Zawr governorates disrupted ISIS's ability to reconstitute, likely affecting future ISIS operations, CJTF-OIR said.⁵⁶

ISIS Maintains Limited Operational Capability, Seeks to Exploit Security Vacuum in Syria

As in previous quarters, ISIS focused its attacks on the Coalition's counter-ISIS partners: the ISF and the SDF.⁵⁷ ISIS continued to urge sympathizers worldwide to attack Jewish, Western, and Shia communities. ISIS stated that music concerts, book festivals, markets, demonstrations, and sports or cultural events with large crowds were "legitimate targets," the DIA said.⁵⁸

The DIA assessed that ISIS maintains "limited operational capabilities" in Iraq because of reduced freedom of movement and access to materiel.⁵⁹ CJTF-OIR reported that in Syria, ISIS showed no significant improvement in its operational capabilities or attack sophistication.⁶⁰ At the same time, ISIS continued efforts to "opportunistically exploit the security situation in Syria" in the wake of the fall of the Assad regime in December, according to the DIA.⁶¹ In Iraq, ISIS operatives did not capitalize on the instability in Syria to improve operations or strengthen manpower.⁶²

The Department of the Treasury (Treasury) reported that ISIS held just under \$10 million in its reserves, which Treasury said was most likely located in Iraq. Treasury also said that ISIS probably generated around \$8 million in 2024 through activities such as kidnapping for ransom, extortion, and donations from domestic and international supporters.⁶³ Treasury said that in 2024, ISIS probably gained more than \$500,000 through virtual assets, mostly from donations, and regularly uses virtual assets to transfer money across borders with relative ease.⁶⁴

The Department of the Treasury reported that ISIS held just under \$10 million in its reserves, which Treasury said was most likely located in Iraq.







Syrian Free Army soldiers and Coalition forces wait to load a CH-47 Chinook during air assault training at At Tanf Garrison, Syria. (U.S. Army photo)

SYRIA

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SYRIA

During the quarter, CJTF-OIR adapted to widespread changes that impacted security, political, and humanitarian conditions in Syria. Uncertainty and instability persisted as the newly formed interim authorities sought to consolidate power after toppling the Assad regime in December 2024.

U.S. military operations continued but were affected by the rapidly evolving security environment in Syria and the broader region. In April, U.S. officials told reporters that the United States had begun withdrawing an estimated 600 troops from northeastern Syria. The U.S. military plans to close three bases: Mission Support Site Green Village and Mission Support Site Euphrates—both in the Middle Euphrates River Valley—and a third, smaller base in Hasakah governorate. U.S. commanders will determine over the next 2 months whether to make additional changes, the reports said.⁶⁵

State reported that the U.S. Government’s high-level policy objectives remained largely unchanged from previous quarters, pending ongoing review of U.S. policy toward Syria.⁶⁶ (See Table 2.) At the same time, the January 2025 pause of U.S. assistance and the subsequent termination of many programs has reshaped the U.S. Government’s assistance in Syria.

A U.S. Army Bradley Fighting Vehicle on a patrol in northeastern Syria. (U.S. Army photo)



Table 2.
U.S. Policy Objectives in Syria

- Prevent Syria from being used as a base for ISIS, Iran-backed terrorism, or other terrorist groups that threaten the region.
- Complete and verifiable destruction of Syria’s chemical weapons program.
- Determine the fate of U.S. citizens missing in Syria and seek accountability for crimes committed against them.

Source: State, response to State OIG request for information, 3/14/2025.

The U.S. Government has not recognized the interim authorities as the government of Syria. Hay’at Tahrir al-Sham (HTS), which initially led the interim authorities, remains a U.S.-designated terrorist organization.⁶⁷ The Islamist-rooted HTS has since dissolved and the interim authorities have reformed into a more inclusive body.⁶⁸ Similarly, while the U.S. Government removed its bounty on Ahmed al-Shara’a, the former HTS leader who leads the interim authorities, he remains a designated terrorist, a designation first applied in 2013, when he led the al Qaeda-affiliated opposition group Jabhat al-Nusra.⁶⁹

State said Syria’s interim authorities should fully renounce and suppress terrorism, exclude foreign terrorist fighters from any official roles, and ensure the security and freedoms of Syria’s religious and ethnic minorities. The United States will continue to assess the interim authorities’ behavior and determine next steps based on their actions.⁷⁰

STABILIZATION AND HUMANITARIAN ASSISTANCE

The U.S. Government has not recognized the interim authorities as the government of Syria. Hay’at Tahrir al-Sham, which initially led the interim authorities, remains a U.S.-designated terrorist organization.

On January 24, all State and USAID stabilization activities in Syria were paused in alignment with the President’s 90-day foreign assistance review.⁷¹

State and USAID BHA did not provide information this quarter on the status of its activities pending the final report of the foreign assistance review.⁷² USAID’s Middle East Bureau, which administers stabilization awards, reported that as of the end of the quarter, three of its awards continued and eight had been terminated.⁷³ (See Tables 3 and 4.)

USAID Syria requested waivers for some terminated awards: essential services activities, support for the White Helmets, and third-party monitoring for activities in northwestern Syria.⁷⁴ On March 27, the Administration terminated the majority of its funding for the White Helmets.⁷⁵ As of the end of the quarter, no requests for waivers for stabilization activities had been approved.⁷⁶

One State stabilization project supporting community security in northeastern Syria received a 60-day exception and resumed operations in February.⁷⁷ This program supported internal security forces to deliver community policing services, provided training to those forces within the al-Hol displaced persons camp where ISIS maintains an active presence, and supported Syrian returns from al-Hol.⁷⁸

All awards related to third-party monitoring of USAID’s stabilization and humanitarian assistance activities were paused or cancelled in three other spots.⁷⁹ One of USAID’s third-party monitoring implementers announced that it has ceased operations because of liquidity challenges resulting from the pause.⁸⁰ USAID BHA reported that it had not plans for third-party monitoring of humanitarian assistance activities in the coming quarter.⁸¹ However, USAID BHA noted that the majority of its implementers maintain their own internal third-party monitoring contracts and will follow their respective schedules.⁸²

Table 3.

Active USAID Stabilization Awards in Syria, as of March 31

Award Name Scheduled Duration Amount Obligated to Date	Activity Description
Economic Growth Enabling Environment in Non-regime Syria (EEE) 9/29/2024–9/28/2027 \$3,500,000	Activities include macroeconomic policy reform, bolstering foundational financial and banking regulatory frameworks, improving the investment climate and private sector competitiveness, attracting foreign direct investment, and supporting accountability and transparency through stakeholder engagement, including local authorities, private sector actors and other donors in non Assad-regime held areas of Syria.
Syria Recovery Trust Fund (SRTF) 4/1/2024 \$5,000,000	Donations to this fund promote the stabilization and recovery of northern Syria through interventions in agriculture, food security, health, water, electricity, access to finance/ livelihoods and waste management.
Accountability and Research Team (ART) 5/15/2020–5/14/2026 \$13,293,309	Provides third-party monitoring services to independently monitor, verify, and analyze the results of USAID stabilization activities implemented in northeast Syria. Increases USAID Syria’s understanding of the output, progress, challenges, successes and lessons learned regarding USAID activities in Syria.

Source: USAID MEB, response to USAID OIG request for information, 3/21/2025.

Table 4.

Terminated USAID Stabilization Awards in Syria, as of March 31

Award Name Scheduled Duration Amount Obligated to Date	Activity Description
Essential Services, Good Governance, and Economic Recovery (BRICC I) 5/13/2020–5/12/2025 \$41,040,098	Worked at the nexus of local governance, the private sector, and civic engagement to expand equitable access to essential services. Partnered with communities liberated from ISIS to restore power, water, and irrigation services; rehabilitate schools and hospitals; strengthen local governance and civil society; and revive high-growth sectors of the economy.

Award Name Scheduled Duration Amount Obligated to Date	Activity Description
Syria Elections & Political Process (EPP) 8/6/2021–8/5/2025 \$7,700,000	Sought to build citizen engagement in responsive democratic processes to contribute to a political solution to the conflict in Syria. Objectives included supporting progress toward a political solution, improving inclusive citizen-state relationships, and enhancing citizens' participation.
Strengthen Community Resilience in Northwest Syria Activity (White Helmets) 2/14/2023–2/13/2028 \$18,210,903	Sought to save lives, increase community stability and resilience, and directly contribute to reducing human suffering. Supported continued operations of the White Helmets with a focus on emergency health and protection services in northwestern Syria. Included a long-term initiative to increase the sustainability of the collaboration between the White Helmets and USAID.
Local Works Strategic Fundraising 6/28/2024–6/30/2025 \$226,156	Sought to deepen and diversify the White Helmets' funding streams so that they can become more financially sustainable and better able to strategically plan longer-term programs and avoid funding cliffs that threaten core operations. Provided capacity-strengthening services on strategic fundraising for the White Helmets so they could develop processes, systems, and capabilities that will allow the organization to increase and diversify its funding streams.
Syria Livelihoods Program (BRICC II) 7/6/2020–7/5/2025 \$14,050,000	Partnered with local businesses to create meaningful employment opportunities in key sectors such as construction, telecommunications, skilled trades, and professional services. Focused on workforce development, vocational training, internships, and business coaching for vulnerable populations, such as women and persons with disabilities.
Growing Agriculture and Incomes in Syria (GROW) 10/1/2023–9/30/2028 \$6,500,000	Sought to improve food security and strengthen agriculture market systems in non-regime controlled areas of Syria. Objectives included increasing local agricultural production, expanding access to food in local markets, and increasing farmers' and/or agribusinesses' incomes.
Izdihar 2/1/2025–1/31/2028 \$2,250,000	Sought to restore market capacity and enhance the performance of local economies in areas where USAID is authorized to work in Syria by improving access to financial services and/or increasing economic opportunity, and/or addressing other gaps that would improve private sector capacity and competitiveness.
Local Works Third Party Monitoring 8/11/2024–8/10/2025 \$247,500	Provided third-party monitoring services, including of White Helmets activities in northwestern Syria.

Source: USAID MEB, response to USAID OIG request for information, 3/21/2025.

SECURITY ENVIRONMENT

Coalition Partners Agree to Join Syrian Interim Authorities

Combined Joint Task Force-Operation Inherent Resolve (CJTF-OIR) works with vetted local partner forces in Syria, including the Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) in northeastern Syria and the Syrian Free Army (SFA) further south along Syria’s southeastern border.⁸³ During the quarter, the new Syrian interim authorities worked to consolidate political, territorial, and military control in Syria, and reached preliminary agreements with both the SDF and the SFA.⁸⁴

Syrian Free Army

On February 3, the SFA announced that it was joining the army of the interim authorities. The SFA commander, Colonel Salem Turki al-Antari, confirmed during the quarter that there was direct coordination between the SFA and the interim defense ministry.⁸⁵ According to CJTF-OIR, Colonel Turki was cited in local media as saying the SFA is ready to carry out any tasks assigned to it by the interim defense ministry.⁸⁶ The Office of the Under Secretary of Defense for Policy (OUSD(P)) said that the United States, which has supported the SFA for years, does not directly support partner force integration into the interim forces, but does not oppose it.⁸⁷

Syrian Democratic Forces

On March 10, SDF commander General Mazloun Abdi signed an agreement with Syrian interim “president” Ahmed al-Shara’a in Damascus.⁸⁸ The 8-point agreement includes integration of SDF-controlled entities in northeastern Syria into Syrian state institutions, including oil and gas fields, an airport, border posts, and military institutions.⁸⁹ (See Table 5.)

Table 5.

8-point Agreement to Integrate the SDF into the Syrian Interim Authorities

1. Guarantee the rights of all Syrians to representation and participation in the political process and all state institutions, based on competence, regardless of their religious and ethnic backgrounds.
2. The Kurdish community is an indigenous community in the Syrian state, and the Syrian state guarantees its right to citizenship and all its constitutional rights.
3. A ceasefire on all Syrian territory.
4. Integrating all civilian and military institutions in northeastern Syria within the administration of the Syrian state, including border crossings, airports, and oil and gas fields.
5. Ensuring the return of all displaced Syrians to their towns and villages and ensuring their protection from the Syrian state.
6. Supporting the Syrian state in its fight against Assad's remnants and all threats that threaten its security and unity.
7. Rejecting calls for division, hate speech and attempts to sow discord among all components of Syrian society.
8. The executive committees shall work and seek to implement the agreement no later than the end of the current year.

Source: Sana, “Signing an Agreement to Integrate the Syrian Democratic Forces into the Institutions of the Syrian Arab Republic, Emphasizing the Territorial Integrity of Syria and Rejecting Partition,” 3/10/2025.

The interim authorities insisted that the SDF integrate as individual fighters who can be dispersed across the country, while the SDF wants to remain a military bloc with its own internal command structure.

The United States welcomed the agreement and reaffirmed its support for a political transition that fosters credible, nonsectarian governance, viewing it as the most effective way to prevent further conflict in the region.⁹⁰

Implementation of the agreement between the interim authorities and the SDF remained incomplete at the end of the quarter. The interim authorities insisted that the SDF integrate as individual fighters who can be dispersed across the country, while the SDF wants to remain a military bloc with its own internal command structure.⁹¹ Prior to signing the deal, the interim “defense minister” stated that the interim authorities are prepared to use force, if necessary, if the SDF refuses to integrate into a centrally-controlled security apparatus.⁹² CJTF-OIR reported that the SDF commander refused to disband the force and urged the formation of a “joint military committee” to explore terms of integration.⁹³

Similarly, political integration of the Kurdish-led northeastern Syria civil authorities organized under the Democratic Autonomous Administration of North and East Syria (DAANES) into the interim authorities remained unsettled. On March 13, 3 days after the interim authorities and the SDF signed an agreement, al-Shara’a announced a temporary, 5-year “constitution” for Syria. The Syrian Democratic Council (SDC), the political wing of the SDF, immediately rejected the 53-article interim constitution, which defined Syria as an Arab republic, mandated that the president be Muslim, and named Islamic law as the main source of jurisprudence—provisions that are similar to the constitution established under the Assad regime.⁹⁴

Prior to signing the temporary “constitution”, al-Shara’a stated that he intends to form a parliamentary government over the next 4 to 5 years, governed by a “constitution” with protections for Syria’s minorities.⁹⁵ He extended participation in forming a “government” to Syria’s most prominent non-Sunni Arab ethnic and religious groups, including Alawites, Christians, and Druze.⁹⁶ Al-Shara’a also expressed his desire to permit women to participate in the political reconstitution process.⁹⁷

The SDC declared that the new “constitution,” did not represent a national consensus, but rather solidified centralized rule and unchecked executive power, limited political activity, and failed to provide clear mechanisms for justice under the transitional authorities.⁹⁸ Al-Shara’a claimed receptivity to Kurdish participation in the government. However, the hastily organized national dialogue conference in February that served as a precursor for drafting the constitution, left out Kurdish and other ethnic, civil, and religious groups.⁹⁹

Interim Security Forces Thwart an ISIS Attack, but Their Counter-ISIS Capabilities Are Nascent

Before its dissolution to become part of the interim authorities, HTS had an estimated 15,000 to 20,000 fighters. During the quarter, Syria’s interim security forces integrated additional armed militia groups.¹⁰⁰ In late January, the interim authorities announced the dissolution of Assad regime-era security institutions and demanded that opposition groups integrate into the central authority, but several southern militias refused to comply.¹⁰¹

CJTF-OIR assessed that the ability of the interim authorities to achieve security in Syria was still in early stages, noting that the authorities will likely require foreign assistance.¹⁰² Although the interim security forces were able to conduct limited ground raids, unmanned aircraft systems (UAS) attacks, and rocket and missile strikes, they had limited air defense capabilities and had received little training on the use of advanced weapons systems.¹⁰³ The interim authorities sought agreements with Türkiye to increase Syria's air defense, air assault, and UAS capabilities, CJTF-OIR said.¹⁰⁴

Threat to U.S. forces: The interim authorities lacked the capability to confront U.S. forces or partners and would be unlikely to do so since they sought to establish and be recognized as a legitimate government, according to CJTF-OIR and the OUSD(P).¹⁰⁵ The Defense Intelligence Agency (DIA) said they had not expressed an intention to threaten U.S. forces or mandate a timeline for withdrawal.¹⁰⁶

Counterterrorism capability: During the quarter, the Sunni-dominated interim security forces thwarted an ISIS attempt to bomb the Sayyida Zainab Mosque in Damascus, an important Shia religious site. The successful operation was the first known counter-ISIS mission conducted by the Syrian interim authorities since the fall of the Assad regime.¹⁰⁷

CJTF-OIR assessed that the interim authorities are unlikely to reconcile with ISIS in the foreseeable future. HTS and its precursor Jabhat al-Nusra had fought ISIS since 2013 and HTS had a track record of locating and destroying ISIS elements during its years administering Idlib governorate. CJTF-OIR said that this experience will probably inform the interim authorities' efforts to suppress a potential ISIS resurgence across Syria.¹⁰⁸

CJTF-OIR assessed that the interim authorities will likely prioritize the consolidation of forces into a centralized military and focus less on counter-ISIS operations in the near term. The Turkish Foreign Minister, Hakan Fidan, offered to assist the interim authorities in fighting ISIS and signaled Türkiye's readiness to take over the administration of SDF-run detention facilities housing close to 9,000 ISIS fighters in northeastern Syria—should the interim authorities be unable to do so.¹⁰⁹

Assad regime weapons and equipment: The interim security forces conducted successive operations to consolidate and secure weapons and equipment left by retreating Assad regime forces.¹¹⁰ The DIA reported that during their advance on Damascus, HTS-led forces captured hundreds of Assad regime tanks and more than 100 armored personnel carriers and infantry fighting vehicles as they asserted control. They also seized dozens of self-propelled and towed artillery pieces, multiple rocket launchers, 16 self-propelled anti-aircraft guns, at least 3 radar-guided surface-to-air missiles, and 7 L-39 ground attack aircraft from former regime airfields.¹¹¹

An Israeli airstrike campaign following the collapse of the Assad regime destroyed some of the former regime's equipment, including aircraft, naval vessels, and facilities associated with chemical weapons and missile programs.¹¹² CJTF-OIR noted that the interim security forces showed their ability to use Assad-era equipment, including tanks, UAS, and artillery, in operations in February targeting smugglers, drug traffickers, and Hezbollah-linked militias.¹¹³

During the quarter, the Sunni-dominated interim security forces thwarted an ISIS attempt to bomb the Sayyida Zainab Mosque in Damascus, an important Shia religious site.

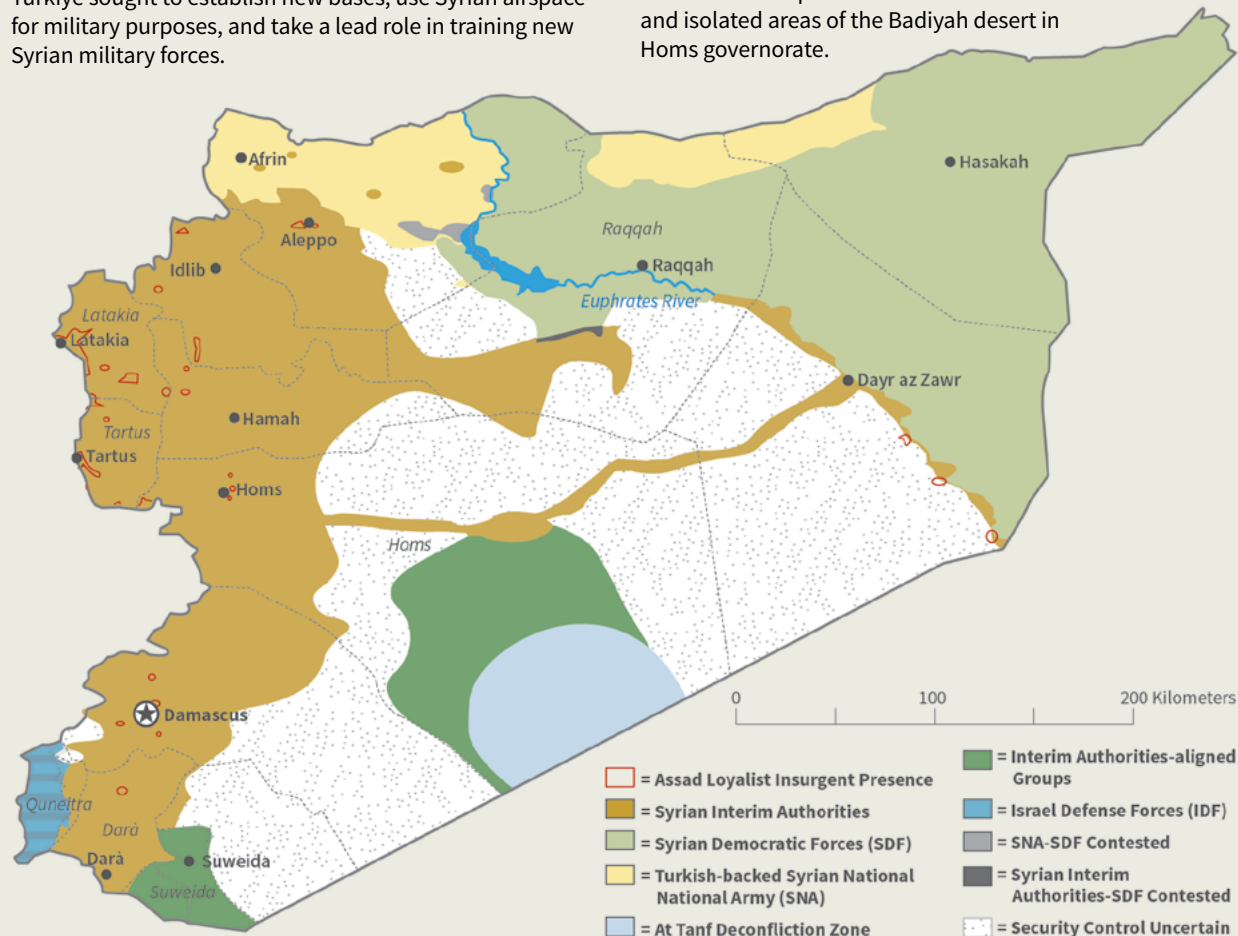
INTERIM AUTHORITIES EXPAND CONTROL, BUT RESISTANCE REMAINS

The Syrian interim authorities consolidated control over portions of western Syria during the quarter and expanded to areas of central and northern Syria. However, control in western Latakia and Tartus governorates was tenuous, with a growing insurgent threat from former Assad regime loyalists. Pockets of opposition resistance also remained in portions of Dara'a and As Suweida governorates in southern Syria.

Türkiye held northern border areas and worked to expand influence with the interim authorities, including assisting in transferring administrative control of some territory from the SNA to the interim authorities, specifically in Afrin. Türkiye and the interim authorities reportedly opened talks on a joint defense pact during the quarter, in which Türkiye sought to establish new bases, use Syrian airspace for military purposes, and take a lead role in training new Syrian military forces.

The SDF continued to control areas of northeastern Syria and to hold portions of Raqqah governorate but clashed with Turkish military and Turkish-backed SNA forces along the Euphrates River.

ISIS fighters were observed in areas further west than at the start of the quarter. ISIS cells remained in caves and isolated areas of the Badiyah desert in Homs governorate.



Israel remained suspicious of the interim authorities in Syria and pushed further into Syria's southern Dara'a and Quneitra governorates, the most extensive Israeli advance since the fall of the Assad regime. Israel also struck military targets in Syria, including Tadmor military airport. The interim authorities did not respond militarily. Israel has demanded demilitarization of the region south of Damascus.

Sources: Institute for the Study of War, "Iran Update, February 1, 2025," 2/1/2025; Institute for the Study of War, "Iran Update, April 1, 2025," 4/1/2025; CJTF-OIR, response to DoD OIG request for information, 25.2 OIR 004 and 25.2 OIR 053, 3/12/2025; DIA, response to DoD OIG request for information, 25.2 OIR 004, 3/11/2025 and 25.2 OIR SUPP003, 4/1/2025; DIA, vetting comment, 4/25/2025; Diaa al-Sahawi, "Syria: Israeli Airstrikes Hit Palmyra Military Airport Amid Unprecedented Quneitra Incursion," New Arab, 3/22/2025.

Al-Qaeda Affiliate Hurras al-Din Announces Dissolution

In late January, the main al-Qaeda affiliate in Syria, the U.S.-designated terrorist organization Hurras al-Din (HaD), announced its dissolution at the behest of al-Qaeda's senior leadership.¹¹⁴ HTS and HaD historically maintained hostile relations, particularly under the HTS administration of Idlib.¹¹⁵

The DIA said the declaration also advised the interim authorities to govern according to a strict interpretation of Islamic Sharia law, likely reflecting al-Qaeda's view on how the new government should rule.¹¹⁶ At the same time, the DIA assessed that the dissolution will probably reduce the potential for conflict with the interim authorities; afford HaD members greater freedom of movement in Syria; and allow some HaD members to integrate into the Syrian interim "government."¹¹⁷ The DIA assessed that as of late January, HaD probably retained connections to al-Qaeda-associated groups that continue to operate under the auspices of the interim authorities and retain some degree of autonomy.¹¹⁸

Even after the dissolution announcement, U.S. operations continued to target HaD operators during the quarter. The U.S. Central Command (USCENTCOM) reported that U.S. airstrikes in February killed three senior HaD leaders.¹¹⁹

Fighting in Western Syria Shows Limits of Interim Security Forces' Control

On March 6, insurgents loyal to the former Assad regime launched a series of coordinated ambushes and attacks targeting interim authorities forces in Syria's coastal areas, which are largely populated by Assad's Alawite sect. At least 172 interim forces members were killed, prompting the interim authorities to put out a call for reinforcements. Thousands of armed militia fighters, including some affiliated with the Syrian National Army (SNA), heeded the call, launching attacks in Latakia and Tartus and nearby areas that killed hundreds of civilians, according to media reports.¹²⁰

After the massacres, the United States expressed solidarity with affected communities and called on the interim authorities to hold the perpetrators accountable.¹²¹ A human rights monitor reported that both sides conducted targeted killings of hundreds of civilians.¹²² Sectarian rhetoric increased in Syria, raising concerns that it could foment a broader conflict.¹²³

The violence exposed the limits of the interim authorities' ability to expand security in Syria. Reports of extrajudicial killings have emerged sporadically since the fall of the regime, mostly targeting Assad's Alawite sect, and despite al-Shara'a's promise of amnesty for those who had been aligned with the Assad regime without blood on their hands.¹²⁴

The DIA said that while the SNA is nominally part of the new Syrian interim "defense ministry", the militias involved probably operated outside of the direct control of the interim authorities during the fighting.¹²⁵ The extent to which core members of the interim security



Coalition and Syrian partner forces meet in the Deconfliction Zone, At Tanf, Syria on February 11, 2025. (U.S. Army photo)

forces may have also participated in those and previous extrajudicial killings is unclear, though evidence of this participation remains limited.¹²⁶ The DIA said that Syrian Alawites were resisting the Syrian interim authorities' reach into western Syria due to fear of reprisal for the actions of the deposed Assad regime.¹²⁷

Following the violence, al-Shara'a tasked a legal committee to investigate the fighting and publish its findings—including those which would condemn forces loyal to him—within 30 days. Of the seven named committee members, two were Alawite and one was a woman. Public statements by Syrian interim authorities emphasized the “need for self-restraint and adherence to moral values and national principles, while ensuring the protection of civilians and public and private property without violations.”¹²⁸

Days after the hostilities along the coast, fighting erupted along the Lebanon-Syria border between Syrian interim authorities and Lebanese fighters, resulting in several deaths.¹²⁹ USCENTCOM reported that the border violence was largely attributed to criminal elements and smuggling by members of Lebanese Hezbollah and former regime elements involved in border smuggling, along with families and clans that have long survived off the illicit trade.¹³⁰

The Syrian interim authorities and Lebanese government officials sent security forces to stabilize the border areas and close illegal border crossings. USCENTCOM said that controlling the entrenched illicit trade will be an enduring problem for the interim authorities.¹³¹ The Syrian interim authorities announced a ceasefire on March 17 which, absent a resumption of fighting, will enable the interim authorities to move some of its forces and equipment away from the Lebanese border, the DIA said.¹³² On March 28, Lebanese and Syrian interim officials agreed to begin the process of border demarcation in an effort to prevent future cross-border clashes.¹³³

Table 6.

CTEF Funding for Syria Train and Equip Requirements, in \$ Millions

Subcategories	Training and Equipping	Logistical Support, Supplies, and Services	Stipends	Infrastructure Repair and Renovation	Sustainment	TOTAL
FY24/25 Requested	\$35.0	\$31.1	\$71.9	\$6.0	\$12.0	\$156.0
FY24/25 Enacted	35.0	31.1	71.9	6.0	12.0	156.0
FY24/25 Obligated*	Obligation data is not available by sub-category					89.5
FY24/25 Disbursed*	Disbursement data is not available by sub-category					17.3
FY25 Requested	15.9	37.8	58.9	15.0	20.40	148.0
FY25 Obligated**	Obligation data is not available by sub-category					0
FY25 Disbursed**	Disbursement data is not available by sub-category					0

Notes: *As of September 30, 2024. **As of February 28, 2025.

Source: OUSD(C), response to DoD OIG request for information, 25.2 OIR 012, 4/7/2025.

SECURITY ASSISTANCE

Long-term U.S. support through the Counter-ISIS Train and Equip Fund (CTEF) remained in place during the quarter, including the payment of partner force stipends; uniforms and individual equipment; and non-lethal assistance.¹³⁴ (See Table 6.) CJTF-OIR said that the extension of FY 2024 funding levels limited CTEF support for partners in Syria, but partner forces could sustain counter-ISIS operations.¹³⁵

SDF Sustains Counter-ISIS Operations Amid Multiple Challenges

CJTF-OIR reported that the SDF continued to partner with Coalition forces during the quarter despite ongoing challenges, including fighting with Türkiye and its partners, ongoing tensions with Arab tribes, and a rapidly changing security and political environment following the fall of the Assad regime.¹³⁶

Operations: During the quarter, the SDF extended security coverage to the west and south from Raqqah and throughout the eastern half of Dayr az Zawr governorate to prevent ISIS from exploiting the collapse of the Assad regime and its forces, according to an SDF spokesperson.¹³⁷ In early March, USCENTCOM reported that the SDF, enabled by U.S. forces, captured an ISIS cell leader and multiple weapons during a raid in a town north of Dayr az Zawr.¹³⁸ Coalition forces also supported the SDF in an operation in Tabqa in which they captured the ISIS military senior leader for Hasakah and Dayr az Zawr governorates, according to a Syria war monitor.¹³⁹



U.S. Army and SDF Soldiers pose for a photo during a partner force presence patrol in northeastern Syria. (U.S. Army photo)

Detainee guard force: The United States seeks to increase the number of SDF and Asayish personnel who are trained to guard detention facilities holding ISIS detainees. During the quarter, SDF-run facilities held approximately 9,000 ISIS detainees. CJTF-OIR said that its observations over 5 years of detention operations indicate that the existing SDF guard force is “effective and reliable.”¹⁴⁰

However, since the fall of the regime, the SDF and Asayish have not had the capacity to conduct training, and during the quarter, they participated in only one training event because they were focused on other priorities, such as fighting Turkish-backed forces.¹⁴¹ CJTF-OIR said that it has limited communication with the guard force leadership, which in turn limits Coalition visibility into any deeper problems that may exist within the guard force.¹⁴²

Similarly, CJTF-OIR reported that although the SDF guard force at facilities holding ISIS detainees remains “adequate” to protect the facilities from the current threat, SDF quick reaction forces that would normally respond to a major incident redeployed to the north to defend against Turkish attacks in the north.¹⁴³

Detention facilities: The SDF remains fully capable of maintaining security at detention facilities while addressing external threats, evidenced by the lack of breakout attempts during the quarter, CJTF-OIR said. U.S.-funded projects to enhance security at SDF detention facilities progressed during the quarter but “have not yet resulted in a marked increase in security,” CJTF-OIR said.¹⁴⁴

Guards at displaced persons camps: CJTF-OIR said that the SDF maintained guard force manning levels and rotations and conducted presence patrols in the al-Hol camp, including after the foreign assistance pause. Those patrols were supported by Coalition ISR.¹⁴⁵ There was no training for camp guards during the quarter because of other SDF priorities.¹⁴⁶ As a result, the number of personnel guarding displaced persons camps in northeastern Syria remained static, and while the SDF had adequate numbers of trained personnel to guard the camps, it does not have sufficient trainers to train future guards, CJTF-OIR said.¹⁴⁷

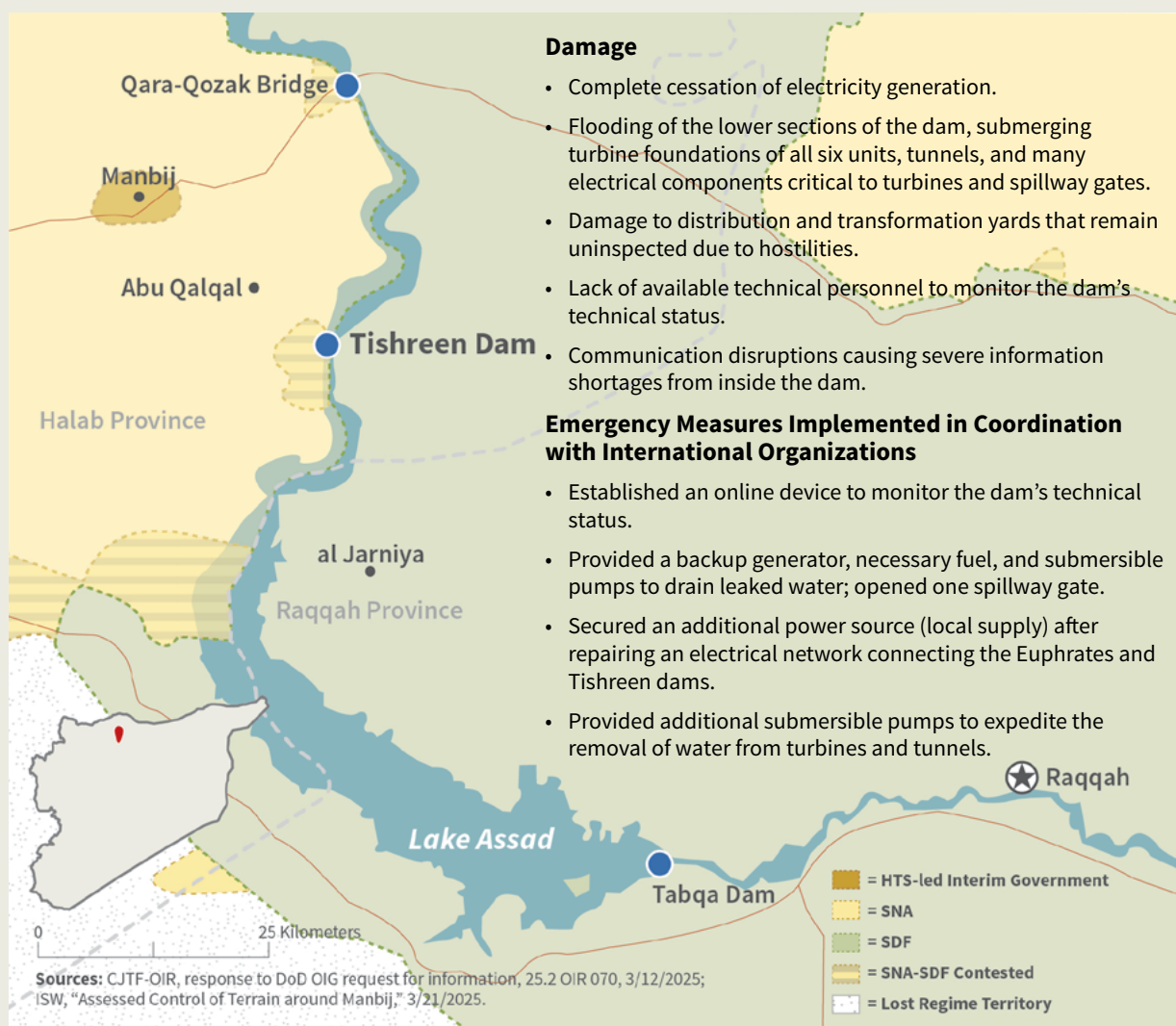
EMERGENCY AT THE TISHREEN DAM

During the quarter, the Turkish military conducted air and artillery strikes on the Tishreen Dam, causing severe damage to the structure. Built in the 1990s, the dam directly supplies electricity to power stations in Kobani, Sirrin, Jarniya, and Manbij through 66-kilovolt transmission lines. Approximately 400,000 people rely on this power supply. The dam is also connected to the Syrian national grid and can supply electricity to any region in Syria when needed. The dam is also a strategic crossing point over the Euphrates River.

Due to the ongoing hostilities, technical teams have not been able to regularly access the dam to conduct inspections and accurate assessments, nor have they been able to perform urgent maintenance and repairs. Even minor damage to the main water reservoir could pose a significant risk to the dam, CJTF-OIR said. Release of the dam's massive water reserves could lead to widespread flooding, catastrophic human losses, the destruction of hundreds of villages, agricultural and natural areas, and the disruption of the ecological balance.

Figure 1.

Map of Controlled Territories around Tishreen Dam



On February 27, the imprisoned Kurdish separatist leader Abdullah Öcalan in Türkiye called for the Kurdistan Workers' Party to disarm and end a deadly, decades-long insurgency against the Turkish government.

CJTF-OIR Acts to De-escalate SDF-Türkiye Tensions

Hostilities between the SDF and Turkish-backed forces during the quarter centered around the Tishreen Dam, the second largest dam in Syria and a key provider of drinking water, agricultural irrigation, and electricity for tens of thousands of people in the region.¹⁴⁸ (See Figure 1.)

Although Coalition forces did not provide military support to the SDF engaged in hostilities with Turkish-backed forces, CJTF-OIR served as liaison between the SDF and Türkiye to improve communications, reduce military miscalculations, and curb unnecessary escalations in northeastern Syria.¹⁴⁹ De-escalation would enable routine access for technical experts to conduct maintenance and repairs at the dam.¹⁵⁰ The CJTF-OIR Commander facilitated discussions to advance ceasefire talks between the SDF and Türkiye.¹⁵¹ CJTF-OIR said that the SDF conducted only tactical level deconfliction with the Turkish-backed SNA militia forces at crossing points along the northern Euphrates River in Syria and in the Middle Euphrates River Valley (MERV).¹⁵²

In early January, the CJTF-OIR Commander attended a meeting of the Syria Working Group with Turkish Ministry of National Defense officials to discuss shared goals and interests after the fall of the Assad regime and resolving hostilities between Türkiye and the SDF. CJTF-OIR reported that Turkish military leadership was committed to continued dialogue with CJTF-OIR to improve communications and limit unnecessary escalations in northeastern Syria.¹⁵³

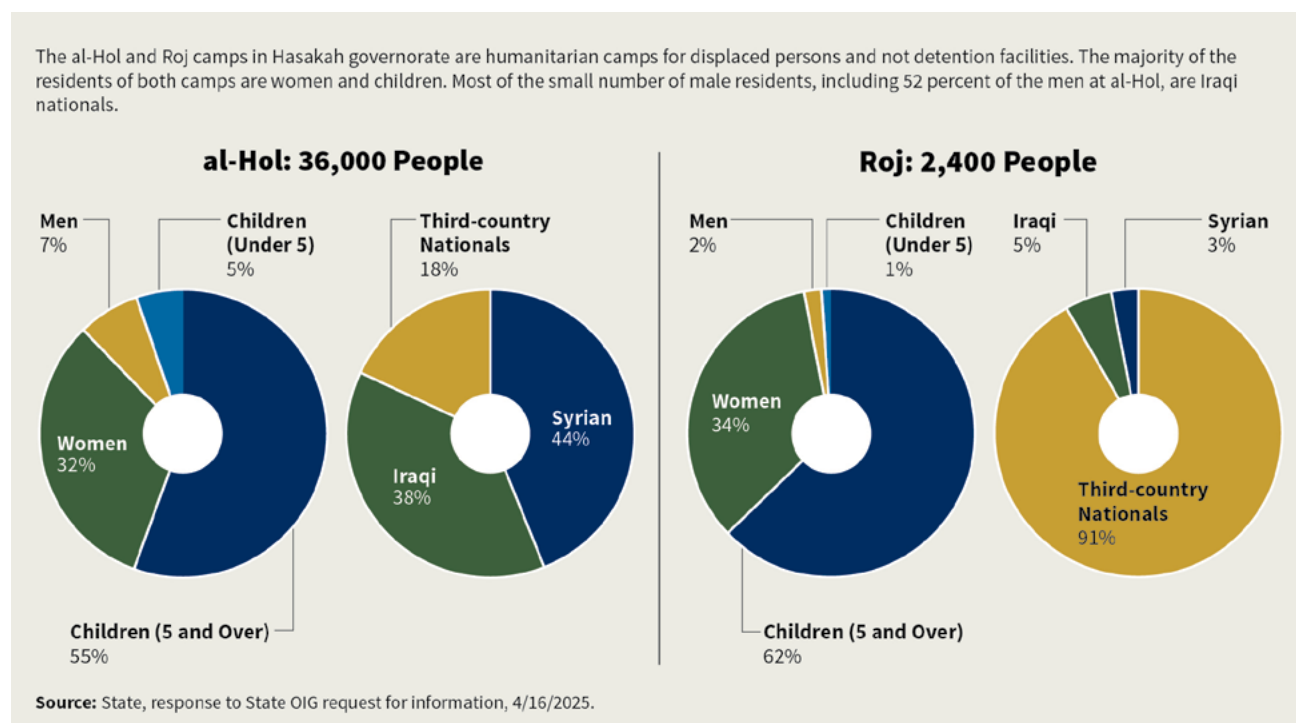
On February 27, the imprisoned Kurdish separatist leader Abdullah Öcalan in Türkiye called for the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK) to disarm and end a deadly, decades-long insurgency against the Turkish government.¹⁵⁴ Türkiye views the SDF, particularly its main Kurdish element, the People's Protection Units (YPG), as an extension of the PKK and does not distinguish between the groups.¹⁵⁵ CJTF-OIR reported that Turkish leaders were optimistic that the call for the PKK to disarm would contribute to a new peace process in Türkiye.¹⁵⁶ However, SDF Commander Mazloum Abdi said that although the historic call would have positive consequences in the region, it did not apply to the SDF.¹⁵⁷

REPATRIATION AND REINTEGRATION

Displaced persons camps in northeastern Syria, particularly the al-Hol camp, have been a security focus in the counter-ISIS fight for years because of the ISIS affiliation of some residents and poor conditions in the camp.¹⁵⁸ ISIS loyalists in the camp continue to indoctrinate and intimidate residents and smuggle fighters into and out of the camp.¹⁵⁹

In a February briefing to the UN Security Council, Ambassador Dorothy Shea, Chargé d'Affaires ad interim, stated that while "U.S. assistance has played a vital role in managing and securing al-Hol and Roj camps" the camps "cannot remain a direct U.S. financial responsibility."¹⁶⁰ The United States continued to urge countries to expeditiously repatriate their displaced and detained nationals to their countries of origin.¹⁶¹

Figure 2.

Population of al-Hol and Roj Displaced Persons Camps During the Quarter

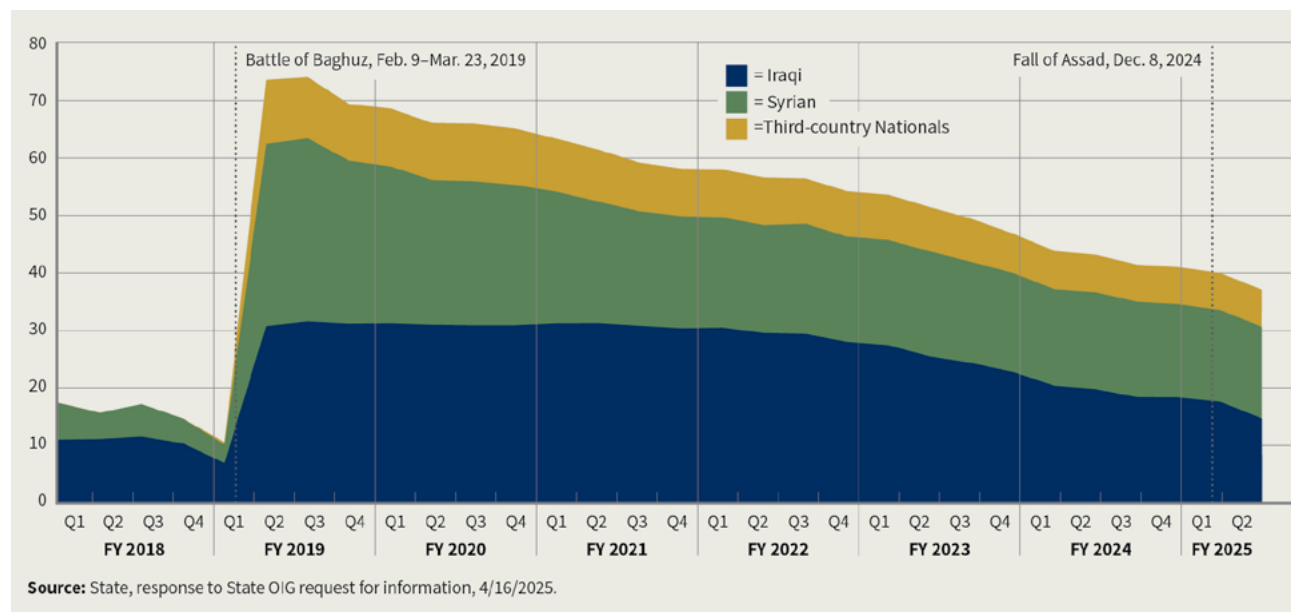
During the quarter, the al-Hol population decreased from approximately 40,000 in the previous quarter to approximately 36,000, while the Roj population dropped from approximately 2,600 to approximately 2,400 this quarter.¹⁶² (See Figures 2 and 3.)

CJTF-OIR reported that ISIS continued to threaten detention facilities and displaced persons camps in northeastern Syria. Most incidents during the quarter involved minor vandalism, but there were some instances of small-arms fire in the vicinity of al-Hol.¹⁶³ CJTF-OIR said that ISIS uses social media platforms to organize and communicate with cells that spread propaganda and encourage unrest in al-Hol. The camp, particularly the foreigner's annex section, is restricted and residents are not permitted to leave. CJTF-OIR said incidents of camp residents caught trying to escape the camp have increased since the collapse of the Assad regime.¹⁶⁴

U.S. Foreign Assistance Pause Impacts Conditions in al-Hol and Roj Camps

CJTF-OIR reported that during the initial pause to U.S. foreign assistance funding, the organization responsible for coordinating humanitarian assistance at al-Hol and Roj camps suspended activities and withdrew camp administration staff, including the contractor employed to secure warehouses and offices. During this period, some of the warehouses and offices were broken into and looted. CJTF-OIR said that SDF Women's Protection Units (YPJ) forces were subsequently able to secure those facilities.¹⁶⁵ CJTF-OIR reported that at

Figure 3.

Population of al-Hol Camp, October 2017–March 2025, in Thousands

one point, the organization was forced to restrict services to only delivering drinking water.¹⁶⁶ USCENTCOM reported that the pause occurred in the middle of an operation to repatriate residents of the camp.¹⁶⁷

The majority of State-funded foreign assistance inside the al-Hol camp is deemed life-saving humanitarian assistance; therefore, State granted a waiver to resume the activities.¹⁶⁸ The service disruptions lasted fewer than 48 hours.¹⁶⁹ The organization that administers the camps continued to provide some services during the pause despite limited funding. Those actions, along with the increase in Iraqi repatriations, limited unrest in the camp to some looting and low-level protests, CJTF-OIR said.¹⁷⁰ Non-lifesaving activities at the camps, including those related to child protection and education, had not been terminated as of the end of the quarter.¹⁷¹

The State-funded project supporting civilian security forces in northeastern Syria—including for security inside al-Hol—was paused on January 24 but resumed in early February under a temporary exception.¹⁷²

Although camp management reported that al-Hol and Roj camps remained relatively calm, and services resumed, camp management noted a noticeable uptick in attempts to smuggle individuals out of the camps, particularly in the Syrian and Iraqi sections.¹⁷³

Coalition countries continued funding assistance for al-Hol during the U.S. foreign assistance review.¹⁷⁴ State said Coalition partners were exploring opportunities for further burden-sharing with the United States in supporting the al-Hol and Roj camps and note that increasing or modifying their assistance would require time given different fiscal years (FY) and budget processes.¹⁷⁵

Table 7.

Repatriations from Syria During the Quarter

Departure Date	Families/Households	Individuals
al-Hol		
January 8	193	715
January 25	146	572
January 30	83	369
February 9	151	557
February 23	165	605
March 12	159	593
March 29	186	681
Roj		
February 11	454	184
TOTAL	1,537	4,276

Source: State, response to State OIG request for information, 3/14/2025 and 3/30/2025; State, vetting comment, 4/14/2025.

Repatriations of Displaced Persons from Syria to Iraq Accelerate

The stop-work order took effect just hours before Iraqi families were scheduled to return to Iraq.¹⁷⁶ Once its funding resumed, the NGO responsible for camp management at al-Hol and Roj continued to support the repatriation process.¹⁷⁷ This included providing pre-departure assistance to families and ensuring they were prepared for the transition.¹⁷⁸

Since the fall of the Assad regime, the Democratic Autonomous Administration of North and East Syria (DAANES) has placed greater emphasis on facilitating the voluntary return of camp residents to their countries and communities. One DAANES official told a media outlet that the DAANES is working to empty camps in northeastern Syria by the end of 2025.¹⁷⁹

While many Western countries have been reluctant to accept their nationals, Iraq has accelerated repatriations and encouraged other nations to follow suit.¹⁸⁰ During the quarter, Iraq repatriated more than 1,500 households from the al-Hol and Roj camps to the Jeddah-1 camp in Iraq.¹⁸¹ (See Table 7.)

Meanwhile, no Syrians departed al-Hol to return and integrate back to their Syrian communities during the quarter.¹⁸² The U.S. foreign assistance pause affected the coordination and facilitation of Syrian returns from al-Hol, because key project activities identifying, preparing, and receiving Syrian returnees were halted.¹⁸³

All USAID stabilization activities in Syria, including those supporting al-Hol, were either paused (as of January 25) or terminated (as of February 26).¹⁸⁴ Five USAID awards had components that supported al-Hol returnees or communities where former al-Hol residents had returned.¹⁸⁵ As of the end of the quarter, no waivers have yet been granted for four stabilization programs for which USAID Middle East Bureau requested.¹⁸⁶

Repatriations of Iraqi Detainees Accelerate

The United States continued to urge countries to repatriate expeditiously and prosecute as appropriate their displaced terrorist-fighter nationals in northeastern Syria.¹⁸⁷ According to State, repatriation reduces the risk of an ISIS resurgence in the region and is the only durable solution to the security and humanitarian challenges posed by al-Hol and Roj camps and detention centers in northeastern Syria.¹⁸⁸ Funding restrictions associated with the pause of U.S. foreign assistance reduced the U.S. local partner's capacity to conduct third-country national repatriation.¹⁸⁹

On March 1, Austria, with U.S. support, repatriated two women and three children from Roj.¹⁹⁰ The SDF coordinated the return of four groups of approximately 50 Iraqi detainees each, and one group of six to Iraq since February.¹⁹¹ The SDF did not coordinate the return of any third-country national or foreign terrorist fighter to other countries of origin during the quarter.¹⁹² Additionally, the SDF did not release any Syrian detainees during the same timeframe.¹⁹³

Thousands of Syrians Remain Displaced by Fighting

As opposition forces advanced across Syria in early December, fighting spiked between the SDF and the Turkish-backed SNA in northern Syria, displacing large numbers of people into northeastern Syria, particularly the town of Tabqa in Raqqah governorate.¹⁹⁴ Since then, an estimated 82,800 IDPs have returned to their areas of origin. However, many other IDPs do not have homes or communities to return to because of ongoing fighting between the SDF and the Turkish-backed forces across northern Syria.¹⁹⁵

CJTF-OIR, citing the Northeast Syria NGO Forum, said the influx of displaced persons prompted the opening of a new reception site in Tabqa in early December 2024 and the use of an additional 35 buildings to host IDPs. Local authorities also established reception sites in Kobane, Hasakah, and Qamishli, and used 186 schools in Raqqah, Tabqa, Hasakah, and Qamishli as shelters, disrupting the education of nearly 185,000 students, according to the United Nations. Healthcare services and water and sanitation services were also severely affected.¹⁹⁶ Reception sites in Tabqa and Raqqah had reached full capacity, CJTF-OIR reported.¹⁹⁷

In February, the United Nations estimated that approximately 7.4 million Syrians were internally displaced.¹⁹⁸ In northwestern Syria, humanitarian organizations provided health assistance to more than 800,000 people and distributed heaters, winter clothing, and other winter aid to 264,000 children since December.¹⁹⁹ However, the humanitarian response remained critically underfunded, with less than 10 percent of the \$1.2 billion required through March secured.²⁰⁰

DIPLOMACY

The United States and Türkiye Coordinate on Regional Stability

On January 9 and 10, then-Under Secretary of State John Bass met in Ankara with senior Turkish officials to discuss Syria, specifically to emphasize the importance of a Syrian-led and Syrian-owned political transition in the spirit of UN Security Council Resolution 2254.²⁰¹ The meetings focused on regional stability, preventing Syria from being used as a base for terrorism, and ensuring the defeat of ISIS. An interagency delegation accompanied then-Under Secretary Bass to meet with counterparts as part of the U.S.-Türkiye Syria Working Group, a mechanism established for coordinating on a wide range of Syria issues.²⁰²

On February 14, Secretary of State Marco Rubio met with Turkish Foreign Minister Hakan Fidan to discuss ways to further strengthen U.S.-Türkiye relations.²⁰³ Secretary Rubio noted Türkiye's leadership in the Global Coalition to Defeat ISIS during discussions of shared interests and objectives in the region, including evolving security threats, addressed through the Global Coalition to Defeat ISIS.²⁰⁴ He emphasized the need for close cooperation to ensure Syria would not be a threat to the United States, Türkiye, or the region.²⁰⁵

Syria and Türkiye Begin Work to Guarantee Sustainable Stability and Security

The Syrian interim authorities continued efforts to rebuild credibility with Western countries. This involved redefining Syria's foreign relations with such nations as Russia and Iran which were key allies of the Assad regime.²⁰⁶ CJTF-OIR said that Saudi Arabia, Türkiye, and Qatar are supporting the interim authorities, while the United Nations has acknowledged promises by Syrian interim authorities to achieve inclusive political transition.²⁰⁷

Türkiye has been a vocal supporter of the Syrian interim authorities and has worked to expand Türkiye's electric grid into Syria to help support reconstruction and developing infrastructure, transportation, and telecommunications, the DIA said.²⁰⁸ On February 4, Syria's interim "president" Ahmed al-Shara'a met with Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan.²⁰⁹ President Erdogan noted "consensus" between Türkiye and the Syrian interim authorities on all issues, according to a media outlet.²¹⁰ Al-Shara'a stated that Syria and Türkiye have begun to work together on humanitarian, economic, cultural, and social efforts; are building a joint strategy to confront security threats in the region; and noted that Syria had consulted with Türkiye on Syria's territorial integrity in northeastern Syria.²¹¹

Türkiye continued to engage with the interim authorities in Damascus, and plans to host a second meeting with Syrian, Lebanese, Jordanian, and Iraqi participants to discuss regional counter-ISIS efforts.²¹²

United States Calls for International Cooperation in Syria Under Chemical Weapons Convention

In January, the United States called for the continued commitment of relevant actors in Syria to work with the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW), the United Nations, and other state and non-state partners to ensure that any remaining elements of the

Assad regime's chemical weapons program are identified, secured, and safely destroyed under international verification.²¹³

In remarks to the UN Security Council, Ambassador Dorothy Shea stressed the importance of a complete and verifiable destruction of Syria's chemical weapons program.²¹⁴ The destruction of Syria's chemical weapons program is not only vital to regional security and stability, she said, but also to preventing weapons from being used for terrorism.²¹⁵

On February 8, OPCW representatives met with interim authorities "president" Ahmad al-Shara'a and Asaad Hassan al-Shaibani, the interim "foreign affairs minister", in Syria.²¹⁶ They discussed Syria's obligations under the Chemical Weapons Convention, the OPCW's role and mandate, and the type of support the OPCW can provide to the interim authorities regarding the remnants of Syria's chemical weapons program.²¹⁷

On March 5, al-Shaibani announced through social media that for the first time, Syria attended the Executive Council of the OPCW in the Hague, highlighting Syria's commitment to international security.²¹⁸ In his remarks to the Executive Council, he committed to dismantling whatever may be left of the Assad regime's chemical weapons program to "ensure Syria becomes a nation aligned with international norms."²¹⁹

Syrian and International Organizations Jointly Request that U.S. Sanctions Be Eased


The Department of the Treasury (Treasury) maintains sanctions on Syria, though following the fall of Assad, it issued a general license authorizing limited sanctions relief supporting continued provision of essential services to the people of Syria, including electricity and energy for 6 months, to allow regional partners to replace energy previously provided by Iran and Russia.²²⁰

Treasury reported that HTS remained designated as both a Specially Designated Global Terrorist and a Foreign Terrorist Organization, which prohibit U.S. citizens from engaging in most transactions, including petroleum-related transactions, or to materially support HTS.²²¹ Additionally, mandatory secondary sanctions remained under the Caesar Syria Civilian Protection Act, which prohibits any activity with the Syrian government or any person designated with respect to Syria, which included 26 people during the quarter.²²²

The Syrian interim authorities seek to get U.S. and other countries' economic sanctions lifted as Syria looks to rebuild.²²³ CJTF-OIR assessed that without economic relief and reconstruction, the interim authorities almost certainly will struggle to maintain order and regain the trust of their citizens.²²⁴

On January 28, 162 Syrian and international organizations sent a joint letter to President Donald J. Trump, Congressional leaders, and the leaders of the Departments of State, the Treasury, Justice, Commerce, and Defense, calling for easing sanctions on Syria, according to the Syrian Network for Human Rights.²²⁵ In the letter, the group noted that Syria has one of the worst humanitarian crises in the world.²²⁶ The letter said that the Assad regime left behind a collapsed economy, destroyed infrastructure, an impoverished population, and shattered government institutions. The letter also said that easing and lifting of sanctions were required to help Syria's economic recovery.²²⁷





A U.S. Army flight crew chief completes safety checks on a CH-47 Chinook helicopter prior to a flight in Erbil, Iraq. (U.S. Army photo)

IRAQ

- 36 Stabilization
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U.S. Army Soldiers stand ready as an M1224 Mine Resistant Ambush Protected vehicle delivers simulated casualties during a mass casualty exercise at Al Asad Air Base, Iraq. (U.S. Army photo)

IRAQ

During the quarter, Iraq continued a political, economic, and security transition that was further shaped by instability in neighboring Syria and the region. The United States' high-level policy objectives remained largely unchanged from previous quarters, pending ongoing review of U.S. policy toward Syria.²²⁸ However, the unrest in Syria led to temporary adjustments in transition plans while the January executive order to pause U.S. foreign development assistance and subsequent termination of foreign assistance awards affected some key U.S. activities in Iraq.

STABILIZATION

The stop-work orders issued in late January 2025 impacted the majority of USAID awards in Iraq.²²⁹ Schools, housing, and health clinics in areas of Iraq to which residents of the al-Hol internal displacement camp in Syria hope to return remain partially rehabilitated and U.S.-purchased streetlights remain uninstalled.²³⁰ As of the end of the quarter, 2 USAID stabilization awards in Iraq were active and 20 were terminated.²³¹ (See Tables 8 and 9.) State did not provide updates for the quarter, pending submission of the foreign assistance review on April 20.²³²

No third-party monitoring of USAID stabilization programs in Iraq occurred during the quarter because of the foreign assistance pause.²³³ The cancellation of the USAID Bureau for Humanitarian Assistance (BHA) Iraq third-party monitoring contract meant that many implementer activities became inaccessible to USAID staff.²³⁴ However, most implementing partners maintained some oversight, and USAID BHA reported that it will continue to oversee implementer activities through monitoring reports and, when feasible, through occasional site visits by USAID personnel.²³⁵

Table 8.

Active USAID Stabilization Programs in Iraq, as of March 31

Award Name Scheduled Duration Amount Obligated to Date	Activity Description
Supporting the Return of Displaced Population in Ninewa Plains and West Ninewa Program 9/29/2018–9/28/2026	Seeks to create an enabling environment for the rapid and sustainable return of internally displaced populations and migrants to their areas of origin in Ninewa Plains and West Ninewa.
Returning with Hope 2/20/2024–2/19/2026 \$5,000,000	Supports the sustainable rehabilitation and reintegration of returning Iraqi populations into their Areas of Origin or Alternative Areas of Return.

Source: State, response to State OIG request for information, 3/17/2025.

Table 9.

Terminated USAID Stabilization Programs in Iraq, as of March 31

Award Name Scheduled Duration Amount Obligated to Date	Activity Description
Durable Communities and Economic Opportunities (DCEO) IDIQ 9/25/2019–9/24/2026	Sought to build resilient, adaptive communities and advance economic well-being in target communities in Iraq by addressing underlying drivers of conflict, increasing community leadership of inclusive local development, improving private sector networks, and increasing micro, small, and medium enterprise development.
DCEO, Task Order 02: Business Competitiveness and Job Creation Initiative (BCJCI) 7/1/2020–6/30/2025 \$27,651,868	Promoted sustainable enterprise competitiveness, increased employment, and expanded private sector development. Strengthened Iraqi businesses ability to expand and meet market demand by providing technical assistance to enterprises and building the capacity of local business associations, organizations, and institutions to overcome constraints to growth, and promoting broader business networks.
DCEO, Task Order 03: 100 Solutions for Stability 7/1/2020–6/30/2025 \$24,500,084	Sought to increase vulnerable communities' management of and recovery from social, political, and economic instability, including the shocks and stressors it precipitates.
Performance Management and Evaluation Services (PMES) 7/1/2020–6/30/2025 \$18,684,679	Monitoring, Evaluation, and Learning Activity for USAID Mission Iraq.

(continued on next page)

Award Name Scheduled Duration Amount Obligated to Date	Activity Description
Climate Adaptation in Iraq: Modeling Water Security and Resilience in Iraq 8/22/2022–8/21/2025 \$700,000	Study to identify the impacts of combined stressors to the priorities of various infrastructure managers and produce a methodology and tools for prioritizing investments to assure water security and system resilience to a range of possible disruptions.
Stabilization Program 7/6/2015–6/30/2027 \$456,250,000	Sought to provide critical, immediate stabilization assistance to demonstrate that the Iraqi government is committed to providing citizens with essential basic services in newly liberated and other areas.
Enabling Resilience in Ninewa Plains and Western Ninewa (Shared Future) 6/14/2018–9/30/2025 \$28,848,414	Focused on youth, social cohesion, and livelihoods because of the strong results and evidence-base generated and has been updated to expand the project's reach to younger participants.
Strengthening the Ankawa Humanitarian Committee to Respond 10/1/2020–3/31/2026 \$28,848,414	Focused on youth, social cohesion, and livelihoods because of the strong results and evidence-base generated and has been updated to expand the project's reach to younger participants.
Preserving the Cultural Heritage of Minority Communities in Iraq 5/12/2021–5/11/2025 \$2,000,000	Sought to preserve the cultural heritage of religious and ethno-religious minority groups in Iraq.
Ahlan Simsim Iraq 7/1/2021–6/30/2027 \$13,000,000	Provided displaced and crisis-affected children with critical early childhood development services, sought to strengthen national early childhood development services. Families and communities impacted by conflict and violence created and participated in inclusive opportunities and have increased resilience capacities that help to counter malign influences.
Institutional Support Services 1/27/2022–1/14/2026 \$2,984,013	Institutional Support Services for USAID Iraq Mission.
DCAA Audit Services 2/1/2006–9/30/2026 \$11,116,956	Auditing Services for USAID Iraq Mission.
Iraq Civil Society Activity 10/1/2023–9/30/2028 \$7,500,000	Meaningful participation of citizens in public life through effective and inclusive representation and increased access to avenues for participation.

Award Name Scheduled Duration Amount Obligated to Date	Activity Description
Iraq Together/Ma'n 11/16/2023–11/15/2028 \$18,700,000	Supported select government entities in Iraq to improve service delivery performance through use of technology and process standardization while increasing the availability of and access to information, particularly related to public services. Fostered improved and inclusive relationships and engagement between the select Iraqi government entities and the communities they serve.
Climate Adaptation for Food Security and Stability 7/1/2024–6/30/2027 \$10,825,000	Addressed Iraq's water scarcity challenges by strengthening the capacity of local governments and enhancing the resilience and adaptive capacity of rural, agricultural communities.
Inclusive Access to Sustainable Water and Sanitation Services 8/1/2024–7/31/2028 \$10,000,000	Worked collaboratively with the Ministry of Construction and Housing, Public Municipalities, community leaders, private sector and other stakeholders to improve access to sustainable, safe, water and sanitation services. Focused on enhancing national and local service delivery systems in targeted governorates while strengthening the role of local communities, civil society organizations and other associations in the promotion of water conservation measures.
Pathway to Identity 9/13/2024–9/12/2027 \$5,000,000	Targeted returnee children in northeastern Syria and their caregivers, especially women/female-headed households, in the J-1 rehabilitation center in Ninawa and in communities of return in Iraq (especially Anbar, Salah Al-Din, Kirkuk and Ninawa).
Durable Communities and Economic Opportunities 9/30/2024–9/24/2026 \$10,300,000	Designed to balance technical, operational, and field implementation capacities to deliver on DCEO's goals.
Supporting Victims and Survivors of Conflicts and Violence in Iraq 1/17/2025–1/16/2030 \$13,000,000	Supported victims and survivors of conflicts and violence in Iraq including ethnic and religious minorities, focusing on enhancing their protection, mental health and psychosocial well being, livelihood opportunities, and access to survivor-centered services.
Iraq Regional Program II 9/6/2021–9/5/2025 \$66,000,000	Worked through small grants to local partners in areas recovering from ISIS, such as Sinjar, Mosul, and Anbar, to reduce threats to stability for vulnerable religious and ethnic communities, including Yezidis, Christians, and other minorities. Rehabilitated infrastructure such as schools, electrical networks, and water systems through local partners, including faith-based organizations, to help communities absorb returnees while minimizing strains on local resources.

Source: USAID MEB, response to USAID OIG request for information, 3/21/2025.

Foreign Assistance Pause and Withdrawal from the WHO Impacts Services for Repatriated Iraqis

The pause on foreign assistance and terminations of USAID programming increased pressure on Iraq to process citizens returning from the al-Hol camp in northeastern Syria.²³⁶ According to State, the United States will likely reduce or end its funding in the coming months as part of its global review of U.S. foreign assistance.²³⁷

Since 2021, the United States has provided the majority of funding for management and humanitarian assistance in the Jeddah 1 rehabilitation center (also known as al-Amal) in support of repatriations of displaced Iraqis from the al-Hol and Roj camps in northeastern Syria.²³⁸

Service terminations: Programs in al-Hol and Jeddah 1 that State considered “critical life-saving,” including programs through the International Organization for Migration (IOM), continued under a waiver for life-saving assistance.²³⁹ Services such as providing clean water, facility maintenance to contain sewage and prevent disease, and basic health services also continued.²⁴⁰

Ultimately three stabilization awards were terminated, including one through UNICEF that was entirely funded by a third-country donor (gift funds for USAID to manage).²⁴¹ A follow-on “Reintegration of al-Hol Returnees” award was to be signed imminently, but this process was permanently stopped by the foreign assistance pause.²⁴²

The foreign assistance pause did not prevent the arrival or accommodation of residents at Jeddah 1.²⁴³ (See Table 10.) As of the end of the quarter, Jeddah 1 remained operational but faced significant challenges in sustaining comprehensive humanitarian support.²⁴⁴ A USAID BHA-supported humanitarian organization reported critical service delivery deficiencies at Jeddah 1 to USAID BHA.²⁴⁵ In addition, programming that helps returnees and their communities work together to reduce tension and address negative perceptions of al-Hol returnees was also terminated.²⁴⁶ Jeddah 1 residents no longer have access to education referrals or remedial education, or to social services and economic activities referrals.²⁴⁷

Table 10.

Population of the Jeddah 1 Camp

Total population as of March 30	1,247 households (4,715 individuals).
Departures during the quarter	Between March 6 and March 18, 18 households (56 individuals) left the Jeddah 1 camp for their areas of origin or relocation.
Total departures	Of the 3,745 households (14,509 individuals) repatriated from al-Hol and Roj, 2,627 households (9,745 individuals) have departed for their home communities in Iraq.
Current accommodations	As of March 30, total of 1,621 tents had been installed, with 1,478 currently occupied, and 143 vacant tents.

Sources: USAID BHA, response to USAID OIG request for information, 3/21/2025; State, vetting comment, 4/15/2025.

Ultimately three stabilization awards were terminated, including one through UNICEF that was entirely funded by a third-country donor (gift funds for USAID to manage).

During the quarter, approximately 109,000 IDPs resided in 21 camps across the Iraqi Kurdistan Region and three informal IDP camps in Ninewa province.

The termination of U.S. support for the WHO primary health center in Jeddah 1 limited residents' access to healthcare, given that the Ministry of Health's clinic had an insufficient medicine supply and remained understaffed.²⁴⁸ As mental health services were suspended, residents were unable to receive their medicine, resulting in significant health implications. If this situation were to continue, according to State, Jeddah 1 residents may experience a significant deterioration in their mental health and well-being, and in some instances, this could be life-threatening, particularly for those who have suicidal ideation, or are psychotic or epileptic.²⁴⁹ According to State's Bureau of Population, Refugees, and Migration (PRM) partners, residents say that limited healthcare for those with a serious or chronic condition was one of the greatest concerns at the camp.²⁵⁰

Efforts to transition services: State said that Iraq must take responsibility for funding activities for the population at Jeddah 1, including camp management, service provision, and expansion of the camp to handle the increased volume of repatriations and reintegration assistance.²⁵¹ More funding for a Jeddah 1 expansion could increase its capacity by 55 percent, which would allow for an increased pace of repatriations from al-Hol and Roj camps in northeastern Syria.²⁵²

State said that the Iraqi government was considering how to increase its support and is engaging other donors about increasing support at Jeddah 1. The United Nations was also speaking with the international donor community about burden-sharing at Jeddah 1.²⁵³

State said that Iraq's Ministry of Health does not have the capacity to provide for mental health services, thus increasing the Jeddah 1 population's mental health and psychosocial vulnerability. There was also a growing gap in the provision of services for women and girls experiencing violence. An increase in begging was observed at Jeddah 1, driven by a lack of financial support from relatives, suspension of cash for work programs, and delays in food ration distribution. State PRM partners observed that the reduction of services primarily affected the elderly, persons with disabilities, and female-headed households, making them more susceptible to exploitation.²⁵⁴

USAID BHA reported that as of the end of the quarter, one of its implementers was preparing Jeddah 1 for additional returns amid ongoing repatriation efforts, including expanding the camp's D and E sectors.²⁵⁵ Additionally, plans were in place to procure non-food item kits and distribute e-vouchers to camp residents for hygiene items and clothing.²⁵⁶ To accommodate the new arrivals, the partner also planned to install 150 tents in Sector D and construct seven communal kitchens and a warehouse to enhance storage capacity.²⁵⁷

Deteriorating Conditions in Displacement Camps

During the quarter, approximately 109,000 internally displaced persons (IDP) resided in 21 camps across the Iraqi Kurdistan Region (IKR) and three informal IDP camps in Ninewa province.²⁵⁸ While the Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG) remained responsible for operation expenses at camps in the IKR, including providing for electricity, sanitation, and water services, the Iraqi government collaborated with UN agencies and nongovernmental organizations (NGO) to provide limited in-kind assistance, such as food and fuel and additional humanitarian assistance.²⁵⁹ However, this support remained inconsistent, further exacerbating challenges for camp residents.²⁶⁰

On January 9, USAID officials visited Kabarto 1 IDP camp in Duhok province to assess the needs of its 1,925 residents and engage with camp management and implementing partners.²⁶¹ Camp residents expressed uncertainty about their future—particularly families with children born in the camp—and frustration over the Iraqi government’s Ministry of Migration and Displacement’s (MoMD) failure to deliver promised services.²⁶² Residents reported inconsistent food assistance, a lack of kerosene for heating tents, delayed return grants, and shortages of water, health, and sanitation supplies.²⁶³

Additionally, a decline in cash assistance reportedly forced some families to send their children to work outside the camp to meet basic needs.²⁶⁴ Many residents cited the presence of armed groups, persistent instability, inadequate infrastructure, and a lack of services and job opportunities in areas of return as key reasons for choosing to remain in the camp.²⁶⁵ Some who had previously left the camp subsequently returned because of those ongoing challenges.²⁶⁶

Approximately 5,250 primarily Sunni Arab IDPs in Ninewa province’s three East Mosul camps were reportedly facing the most severe conditions, exacerbated by strict movement restrictions imposed because of security concerns over their perceived affiliation with extremist groups.²⁶⁷ The irregular and insufficient provision of essential humanitarian aid—such as electricity, food, hygiene kits, and winterization support—further worsened living conditions and heightened tensions within the camps.²⁶⁸

Additionally, around 600 IDPs previously detained by KRG authorities for crimes, including alleged ISIS affiliation, and their families—totaling 2,075 people—were unable to return to their areas of origin due to risks of discrimination and further detention upon reentry into Iraq.²⁶⁹ Individuals residing in Hassansham U3 Camp in Ninewa province remained unregistered due to the suspension of new camp registrations since September 2022, preventing them from accessing government-provided assistance.²⁷⁰

Approximately 5,250 primarily Sunni Arab IDPs in Ninewa province’s three East Mosul camps were reportedly facing the most severe conditions, exacerbated by strict movement restrictions imposed because of security concerns over their perceived affiliation with extremist groups.

SECURITY ENVIRONMENT

In September 2024, the United States and Iraq announced a plan to transition the U.S.-led OIR military campaign to a long-term U.S.-Iraqi bilateral security partnership.²⁷¹ In the first phase of the plan, CJTF-OIR will cease direct counter-ISIS military operations in Iraq by the end of September 2025, but will sustain Coalition support from the IKR to counter-ISIS military operations in Syria through at least September 2026.²⁷² In the second phase, CJTF-OIR will continue operations against ISIS in northeastern Syria from military bases in the IKR until September 2026. The timeline for executing both phases is subject to conditions on the ground and consultations among Iraq, the United States, and Coalition members.²⁷³

ISF Focuses on Securing its Border with Syria

The Defense Intelligence Agency (DIA) reported that ISF units remained postured at the border with Syria to prevent ISIS operatives from crossing into Iraq and that the three Iraqi-Syrian border crossing remained closed as of the end of the quarter.²⁷⁴ According to media reports, in January, the Iraqi government also temporarily set up a joint operations room with



A U.S. Army cannon crewman prepares an M119A3 Howitzer prior to a live fire exercise at Al Asad Air Base, Iraq. (U.S. Army photo)

the Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) at a crossing near the Sinjar region in northwestern Iraq, but subsequently disbanded the effort.²⁷⁵

CJTF-OIR reported that the Iraqi government repatriated Syrian soldiers who had sought refuge in Iraq following the fall of the Assad regime.²⁷⁶ Media reports said that some 2,500 soldiers had fled to Iraq and that the Iraqi government continued to host 130 former Syrian regime officers who also fled, confining them to a military camp near Baghdad.²⁷⁷ The repatriation came after Syria's new interim authorities announced a general amnesty for the soldiers.²⁷⁸

The border crossing had been closed since early December, following the collapse of Syria's government.²⁷⁹ However, according to media reports, the Popular Mobilization Forces (PMF), an umbrella of militias that operate under the Iraqi Prime Minister, subsequently deployed anti-armor units to the border.²⁸⁰

Some Iran-aligned Militias Regroup in Iraq

CJTF-OIR reported that some fighters belonging to Iran-aligned militia groups (IAMG) that had been operating in Syria regrouped in Iraq following the collapse of the Assad regime.²⁸¹ CJTF-OIR said that it "assumes" that many of them were smuggled into Iraq with the help of Iraqi IAMGs.²⁸² Iraq experts said that IAMGs in Syria also fled to Lebanon or other home countries after Assad's government fell and Syria's new interim authorities announced that militias would be dissolved and fighters integrated into the Syrian national forces.²⁸³

COALITION ADVISING IN IRAQ

Kurdish Peshmerga

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

Counter Terrorism Service (CTS)

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

Iraqi Security Forces (ISF)

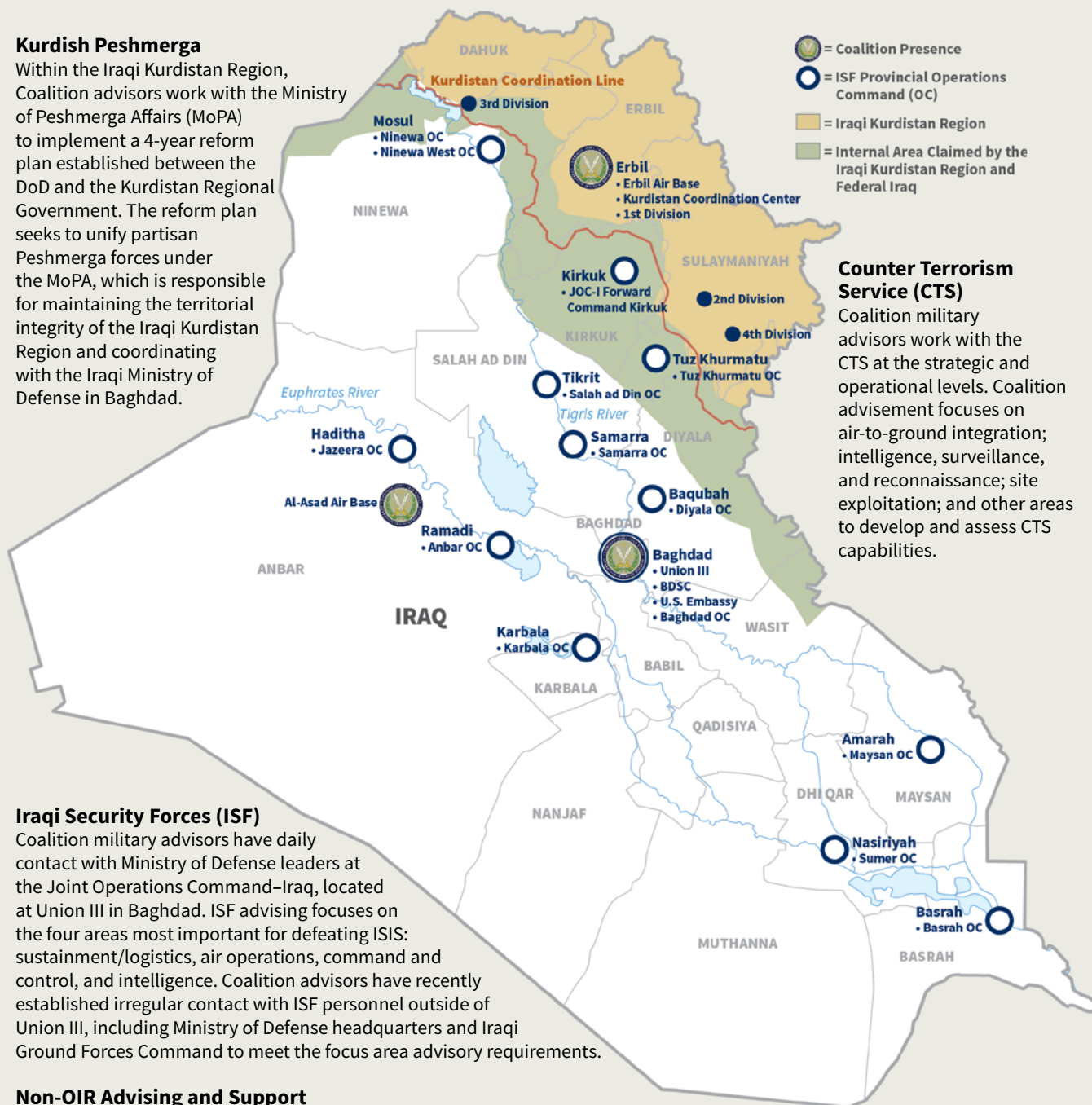
Coalition military advisors have daily contact with Ministry of Defense leaders at the Joint Operations Command–Iraq, located at Union III in Baghdad. ISF advising focuses on the four areas most important for defeating ISIS: sustainment/logistics, air operations, command and control, and intelligence.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

Non-OIR Advising and Support

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

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

Source: CJTF-OIR, vetting comment, 4/15/2025.



CJTF-OIR characterized Iraq as a “more restrictive environment” than Syria for militia operations targeting U.S. and Coalition forces.²⁸⁴ However, the Iraqi government remains “largely ineffective” in preventing militia attacks on U.S. or Coalition personnel, CJTF-OIR said.²⁸⁵ The militias’ reconstitution in Iraq poses a potential threat, as the groups continue to “harbor a profound and enduring animosity toward the U.S, stemming from a complex array of historical, political, and ideological factors,” according to CJTF-OIR.²⁸⁶ These include resentment of the United States’ involvement in Iraq’s internal affairs since 2003 and a belief that the United States is not committed to withdrawing forces from Iraq.²⁸⁷

CJTF-OIR reported that to counter potential IAMG attacks, Coalition forces maintain layered defense systems and multiple means of detection, while personnel continually refine procedures and systems and conduct base defense drills and realistic scenario-based training exercises.²⁸⁸ In addition to these measures, Coalition forces conducted airstrikes against militia targets in previous quarters.²⁸⁹

According to media reports, the Iraqi government was trying to convince armed factions aligned with Iran to disarm or join official security forces following the fall of the Assad regime.²⁹⁰ The reports said that militia leaders rejected the call to disarm, and several government officials said the militias were “vital” to Iraq’s security.²⁹¹ Discussions over disarmament between the Iraq government and some armed groups were ongoing as of the end of the quarter, according to media reports.²⁹²

The push to bring armed groups in Iraq under state control occurred as Iran’s armed allies in Lebanon have been heavily degraded.²⁹³ However, according to media reports and Iran experts, Iran has moved to reconstitute its militias in Lebanon and to support IAMGs in Iraq by providing them with long-range missiles for the first time.²⁹⁴

SECURITY ASSISTANCE

The Combined Joint Task Force-Operation Inherent Resolve (CJTF-OIR) pursues the OIR mission in Iraq by advising, enabling, and assisting components of the ISF, the Iraqi Counter Terrorism Service (CTS), and Kurdish Peshmerga forces.²⁹⁵

Long-term U.S. support through the Counter-ISIS Train and Equip Fund (CTEF) remained in place, including the payment of Peshmerga stipends; vehicles and heavy equipment; small arms and ammunition; uniforms and individual equipment; and non-lethal assistance.²⁹⁶ (See Table 11.) A substantial amount of CTEF requested for FY 2025 was designed to support the equipping and establishment of Iraq’s new joint brigades and desert battalions (\$129.8 million).²⁹⁷

State’s pause in overseas assistance funding did not affect DoD’s CTEF. Despite changes in overall DoD funding because of congressional continuing resolutions, CTEF funding for Iraq remained constant.²⁹⁸

Congress appropriated \$1.18 billion for Foreign Military Financing (FMF) for Iraq from FY 2020 through FY 2024. Congress appropriated \$175 million for FY 2024, even though State requested a reduced amount of \$75.5 million because previously appropriated FMF funds remained available. State requested \$90 million for FY 2025. State said that

Coalition advisors meet with the Peshmerga command team at the Regional Logistics Hub, Duhok, Iraq. (U.S. Army photo)



FY 2024 FMF funds had been allocated but none had been spent. At the end of the quarter, \$770.3 million (66 percent) of available funds had been spent.²⁹⁹

State’s Non-Proliferation, Antiterrorism, Demining, and Related Programs (NADR) account plays an important role in Iraq and funds four subaccounts—Conventional Weapons Destruction, Antiterrorism Assistance, Export Control and Related Border Security, and Counterterrorism Financing. In Iraq, State has historically used NADR funds for subaccounts. However, in FY 2024, funds were spent only for the Conventional Weapons Destruction account, which plays a critical role in removing dangerous explosive remnants of war in Iraq.³⁰⁰ State said that funds for the other sub-accounts’ programs in Iraq were allocated but not spent in FY 2024.³⁰¹

Table 11.

CTEF Funding for Iraq Train and Equip Requirements, in \$ Millions

Subcategories	Training and Equipping	Logistical Support, Supplies, and Services	Stipends	Infrastructure Repair and Renovation	Sustainment	TOTAL
FY24/25 Requested	\$41.7	\$12.3	\$135.0	\$10.5	\$42.5	\$242.0
FY24/25 Enacted	41.70	12.3	135.0	10.5	42.5	242.0
FY24/25 Obligated*	Obligation data is not available by sub-category					145.8
FY24/25 Disbursed*	Disbursement data is not available by sub-category					47.9
FY25 Requested	257.0	9.7	60.0	4.8	49.2	380.7
FY25 Obligated**	Obligation data is not available by sub-category					0
FY25 Disbursed**	Disbursement data is not available by sub-category					0

Notes: *As of September 30, 2024. **As of February 28, 2025.

Source: OUSD(C), response to DoD OIG request for information, 25.2 OIR 012, 4/7/2025.

END-USE MONITORING OF MILITARY ASSETS PROVIDED TO IRAQ

Military materiel provided to Iraq under the Arms Export Control Act are subject to end-use monitoring (EUM) mandates to ensure that the appropriate units are using them consistent with the requirements of those agreements. Under the mandates, the United States routinely performs EUM, but because the DoD considers Iraq a “hostile environment,” security restrictions limit the ability of U.S. personnel to conduct mandated monitoring. Therefore, the Iraqi government routinely provides quarterly inventory reports to the DoD to supplement direct observations by U.S. personnel.³⁰²

Monitors from the Office of Security Cooperation–Iraq use both routine and enhanced methods to conduct EUM. They conduct routine EUM in conjunction with other security cooperation events. The most consistent method of routine EUM is quarterly reporting by the Iraqi ministries of Defense and Interior, the Counter Terrorism Service (CTS), and the KRG Ministry of Peshmerga Affairs. Thousands of defense articles are detailed in these reports, alongside additional reporting of defense articles from the 38 individual routine EUM visits by Office of Security Cooperation–Iraq monitors since their return from ordered departure in April 2024.³⁰³

Enhanced EUM is required for specific defense articles. In Iraq, night vision devices and Stinger missiles comprise 95 percent of the nearly 5,900 enhanced EUM articles. Monitors must verify annually these articles in person by serial number or bar code. During the quarter, Office of Security Cooperation–Iraq personnel physically verified approximately 1,050 enhanced defense articles, across six site visits to Ministry of Defense, Interior, and Peshmerga Affairs locations. This accounts for about 18 percent of the annual requirement.³⁰⁴

LEAHY LAW CERTIFICATION

State reported that it was not aware of any instances during the quarter in which the United States provided assistance to Iraqi security forces in violation of the Leahy laws. The Leahy laws refer to two statutory provisions prohibiting certain U.S. assistance from being provided to a unit of a foreign security force if the U.S. Government has credible information that the unit has committed a gross violation of human rights. State vets proposed recipients of such assistance to determine if there is credible information that they have committed a gross violation of human rights.³⁰⁵

IRAQI SECURITY FORCES

Coalition advisers based in Baghdad continued to advise the ISF on specific warfighting functions primarily through the Joint Operations Command-Iraq (JOC-I), a cross-functional organization that operates using Ministry of Defense assets, reports to the prime minister, and participates in operations against ISIS but does not command them.³⁰⁶

CJTF-OIR said that although the JOC-I does not command operations, it maintains a “critical role” in the intelligence fusion and deliberate targeting processes that culminate in airstrikes against ISIS and maintains public affairs and information operations capabilities.³⁰⁷ Coalition advisers advise, assist, and enable the JOC-I to execute those elements of operations against ISIS.³⁰⁸

Table 12.

Coalition Advising of JOC-I Capabilities

Warfighting Function	Advising and Results
Command and Control	The JOC-I coordinated, observed, and reported on operations against ISIS, including operations executed by Desert Battalions and Joint Brigades. Four of five Desert Battalions are fully staffed, while the 1st Joint Brigade is at 80 percent operational capability and the 2nd Joint Brigade is 100 percent operational.
Airstrikes	Airstrikes against ISIS continued at a “high pace” due to the JOC-I’s ability to effectively direct organic ISR, the Iraqi Air Force, and ITACs.
Strike Cell	The JOC-I Strike Cell maintained an increased level of planning for counter-ISIS strikes. Coalition advisers continued to build the JOC-I’s capabilities to collect intelligence, execute command and control, and undertake joint fires.

Sources: CJTF-OIR, response to DoD OIG request for information, 25.2 OIR 036 and 25.2 OIR 037, 3/12/2025, and 25.2 OIR FOL036, 3/31/2025.

JOC-I ISR and Targeting Improvements Result in Airstrikes Against ISIS

Coalition advisers facilitated training in several warfighting functions, including command and control, intelligence, sustainment, and joint fires.³⁰⁹ (See Table 12.)

Iraqi Air Force and Army Aviation Command: CJTF-OIR reported that the Iraqi Air Force continued to make incremental capability gains, enabling accurate and timely strikes against ISIS targets.³¹⁰ CJTF-OIR also reported progress in employing tactical air controllers, which facilitate strikes planned by the JOC-I Strike Cell.³¹¹

CJTF-OIR reported that the JOC-I effectively directed organic ISR, the Iraqi Air Force, and Iraqi Terminal Attack Controllers (ITAC) in support of operations against ISIS during the quarter.³¹²

Other Units: Coalition advisors continued to advise and assist ISF units outside the JOC-I, including the Iraqi Ground Force Command, the Basra Operations Center, and the ISF Artillery School at Camp Taji. Coalition advisors also worked with Desert Battalions, the Joint Brigades, and the Iraqi Air Force Command.³¹³

Counter Terrorism Service: CJTF-OIR reported that the Counter Terrorism Service (CTS) conducted several successful counter-ISIS operations to degrade ISIS leadership networks and operational effectiveness in Iraq.³¹⁴ CJTF-OIR said that the CTS, considered Iraq’s premier counterterrorism service, possesses the ability to maintain counterterrorism pressure with targeted and focused Coalition support.³¹⁵ CTS counterterrorism efforts against ISIS have resulted in a consistent downward trend in ISIS attacks, CJTF-OIR said.³¹⁶

Peshmerga reform continued to progress against a “backdrop of numerous security threats and regional political and military uncertainty,” CJTF-OIR said.

KURDISH PESHMERGA

In September 2022, the United States revised and renewed a memorandum of understanding (MoU) with the KRG Ministry of Peshmerga Affairs (MoPA) to support reform measures that seek to create a unified, nonpartisan military organization that operates under MoPA command. The non-binding MoU has served as an organizing framework for DoD counter-ISIS support to the MoPA since 2016 and encourage continued MoPA reform. The MoU will remain in effect until the end of September 2026, subject to the availability of funds.³¹⁷

Security Threats and Political Uncertainty Complicate Peshmerga Reform Efforts

Peshmerga reform continued to progress against a “backdrop of numerous security threats and regional political and military uncertainty,” CJTF-OIR said. This included events in Syria; the presence of Turkish soldiers and fighters from the Kurdistan Workers’ Party (PKK); the continued presence of ISIS; incursions of Popular Mobilization Forces; and ongoing disputes with the Federal government over salary and revenue issues, among other challenges.³¹⁸

CJTF-OIR reported that the common threat of ISIS and the need for strength in numbers have helped MoPA as it seeks to implement reforms against this backdrop.³¹⁹ However, old political alignments are still evident and can slow agreements and hinder trust. CJTF-OIR said that political divisions are “expected to dwindle” over time as MoPA reforms are implemented.³²⁰ However, the DIA reported that KRG officials have made comments that suggest concern over persistent partisanship within the MoPA even after units are transferred to it from the politically-aligned 70s and 80s Forces.³²¹

Despite those obstacles, CJTF-OIR reported that the reforms remained on track.³²² Those reforms include the following:

Transfer of politically affiliated forces: The operating concept approved by the KRG includes plans to disband the partisan 70s and 80s Forces by gradually transferring the remaining personnel from the 70s and 80s Forces to the command and control of the MoPA by the end of September 2026, when the MoU concludes.³²³ Ultimately, the MoPA plans to establish two Area Commands, 11 light infantry divisions, and two Support Force Commands.³²⁴ Four of the 11 divisions are fully or partially operating, and two additional divisions were in the process of adding personnel.³²⁵ However, State reported that the timeline for the Area Commands to reach initial operating capacity will not be met.³²⁶ The planned end strength for Peshmerga under the MoPA’s command is 138,000.³²⁷

Standing up MoPA divisions: CJTF-OIR noted progress toward standing up the 3rd and 4th Divisions, including the appointments of division commanders. However, the 4th Division remained short of about 700 personnel due to ongoing budget and payment reforms at the ministerial level and a lack adequate funding for a permanent operations center.³²⁸ The 5th and 6th Divisions underwent training, and new operations centers had either been identified or were under construction.³²⁹

Electronic payment of salaries: The MoPA continued to implement reforms to pay Peshmerga forces electronically and had submitted a proposal for a single line of accounting to the KRG for approval.³³⁰ As of February, more than 68,000 personnel belonging to the 1st, 2nd, and 3rd Divisions were set up to receive salaries electronically. However, only 62 percent received salaries electronically, 24 percent received their salaries in cash, and the remainder received payments through the previously used banking system.³³¹ The 4th, 5th, and 6th Divisions had not entered the electronic payments system, so their personnel continued to receive payments from their former partisan commands, the 70s and 80s Forces.³³²

Retirement of excess personnel: The MoPA remains on schedule to retire excess Peshmerga personnel before the MoU expires in September 2026.³³³ Meeting this goal is critical because the 70s and 80s Forces will not cover salaries for excess personnel after that date.³³⁴ However, the retirement process stalled during the quarter, as the KRG sought to resolve pension discrepancies between the previous KRG system and the new Iraqi government schemes, which provide pensioners with 15 percent less pension funds.³³⁵

Creation of a MoPA Operations Command (MoPOC): The MoPA continued to develop the MoPOC, which will be a coordination cell comprising an operations room, planning room, and intelligence cell operating under the command of the MoPA. The MoPOC will not oversee planning or joint operations but will maintain liaison functions with the Joint Coordination Centers in Mosul, Kirkuk and other areas in disputed areas between the IKR and Federal Iraq, and will work with the JOC-I in Baghdad.³³⁶

CJTF-OIR noted that it does not advise divisions on direct action against ISIS, but rather advises on methods to increase division capability to defeat ISIS.

Development of MoPA Division Capabilities Remained on Track

CJTF-OIR reported that the four MoPA Divisions in various stages of operation demonstrated a basic ability to synchronize their staffs to integrate warfighting functions and meet intermittently with Regional Guard Brigades (RGB), but typically only when prompted to do so by advisors. Staff officers received and distributed reports and organized training of subordinate units. However, most communication and decision-making occurred between division and RGB commanders. Division commanders and staff were slowly moving toward increased coordination with higher, adjacent, and subordinate staffs.³³⁷

Operationally, the divisions can perform area defense, which includes maintaining static battle positions with limited mobile offensive capability. The divisions can organize up to battalion-level offensive operations using their motorized commando battalion. The RGBs can organize up to company-level offensive operations using their commando companies.³³⁸

CJTF-OIR reported that advising Peshmerga forces was expected to become more challenging once the MoPA sets up the Area Commands and advisors begin advising them, thereby reducing the amount of time available for advising at the MoPA headquarters.³³⁹ However, CJTF-OIR said that some MoPA directorates had shown enough initiative to warrant a decrease in advisement.³⁴⁰ CJTF-OIR noted that it does not advise divisions on direct action against ISIS, but rather advises on methods to increase division capability to defeat ISIS.³⁴¹

CJTF-OIR noted incremental progress in MoPA warfighting functions. (See Table 13.)

Table 13.

Status of MoPA Warfighting Functions During the Quarter

Function	Description
Mission Planning	<p>The four Divisions in operation demonstrated basic proficiency in planning operations such as patrols along the Kurdish Coordination Line (KCL) and training exercises. However, CJTF-OIR described operational planning as “still in its infancy.” The MoPA was not yet capable of undertaking operational and tactical planning at the same level of proficiency as the ISF. Most planning occurs at the battalion level and below, with RGBs providing approval and oversight. The MoPA was not involved in the planning of operations south of KCL even when MoPA personnel participated in the operation.</p> <p>Coalition advisers focused on mission planning at the division level and produced a plan for steps to take to defend Erbil in the event of an ISIS incursion.</p>
Ground Operations	<p>RGBs operating under the control of the MoPA continued to demonstrate capacity to conduct counter-ISIS military operations and create area defense plans along the KCL for this purpose. RGBs held temporary checkpoints and conducted reconnaissance and ambush operations and patrols directed at intercepting and discouraging ISIS activity within their areas of operations. Ground operations are approved by the MoPA, which mitigates risks arising from the divisions’ various levels of command and control proficiency but also risks delaying operations. Coalition advisers continue to advise deputizing points of authority.</p>
Command and Control (C2)	<p>The 1st, 2nd, and 3rd Divisions were fully staffed, equipped, and trained. The 4th Division had not received a radio system to communicate directly with subordinate RGB headquarters; nor had it begun construction of its operations center due to KRG-level budget constraints. The MoPA, in consultation with the 70s and 80s Forces, is staffing the two Area Commands, which will assume command and control over the divisions.</p>
Artillery	<p>The two Support Force Commands were able to provide basic indirect fire support to the divisions and the RGBs. The divisions demonstrated a basic capability to integrate mortars into division-level planning. Coalition advisers continued to advise on ammunition storage and safety procedures and fires activities, including the placement of forward observation officers. Advice remained at a high level and on general procedures such as training and readiness. Advisers worked with the 5th and 6th Divisions to prepare for validation exercises in May and June 2025.</p>
Logistics and Sustainment	<p>The MoPA continued to make steady progress toward improving its logistics and force sustainment enterprise. The two Regional Logistics Hubs had sufficient facilities, workforce, and equipment for basic operations. The MoPA lacked an effective supply and distribution chain linking the warehouse with the regional hubs and the regional hub lacked sufficient transport capabilities. The directorate lacked secure internet to compile and transmit data. Finally, the MoPA lacked spare parts for vehicles.</p>
Information Operations	<p>The MoPA did not have a department specifically dedicated to information operations. Instead, it focused on advertising cooperation with the Coalition and teaching Peshmerga personnel about humanitarian law and societal problems, such as the use of illicit drugs and other crimes. The directorate has demonstrated an interest in developing an understanding of information operations and the Coalition will continue to provide advice and awareness training. Advisers provided an information operations training course for the first time during the quarter. Relations between Baghdad’s Security Media Cell and the MoPA’s media office improved. The MoPA media office is in the process of establishing a radio station to disseminate information.</p>

Sources: DoD OIG: CJTF-OIR, response to DoD OIG request for information, 25.2 OIR 042 and 25.2 OIR 043, 3/12/2025.

DIPLOMACY

Iraqi Government Engages Regional Leaders

The diplomatic environment in the Middle East remained dynamic as the world considered the effects of the fall of the Assad regime. Although some countries moved decisively to engage the Syrian interim authorities, State said that others remained more skeptical.³⁴²

Syria: Iraqi officials across the political spectrum expressed concern about instability in Syria and the potential for ISIS resurgence. According to State, Iraqi government officials were surprised by the fall of the Assad regime and directed resources to ensure the Iraq-Syria border was secured and to accelerate the repatriation of Iraqi nationals from displaced persons camps and detention facilities in northeastern Syria. Some Iran-aligned Shia Coordination Framework party leaders called for military intervention in Syria, but the Iraqi government did not intervene. Kurdish political groups encouraged Syrian Kurds to engage with the interim authorities in Damascus and mitigate clashes between various armed groups.³⁴³

In January, Foreign Minister Fuad Hussein participated in the Saudi-hosted multilateral meeting on Syria in Riyadh. According to local press, Iraqi National Intelligence Service head Hamid al-Shatri traveled to Damascus and met with Syrian interim authorities' security officials. Iraq accelerated the rate of repatriations from northeastern Syria and enhanced border security to protect against ISIS incursions.³⁴⁴

Arab League: On March 4, President Abdullatif Jamal Rashid, Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Fuad Hussein, and KRG Deputy Prime Minister Qubad Talabani attended the emergency Arab League Summit on Gaza in Cairo, according to State. President Rashid addressed the summit, condemning any displacement of Palestinian people and advocating the international and Islamic communities to act with urgency to confront this issue.³⁴⁵

On the sidelines of the summit, President Rashid met with Jordan's King Abdullah Al-Hussein to discuss regional issues and Lebanon's President General Joseph Aoun to "create opportunities for deeper cooperation," according to statements from the Iraqi president's office. State said some Iraqi news sources on social media were critical of Talabani's participation in the summit as the only non-Arab invited as part of the official delegation.³⁴⁶

According to State, Iraqi government officials were surprised by the fall of the Assad regime and directed resources to ensure the Iraq-Syria border was secured and to accelerate the repatriation of Iraqi nationals from displaced persons camps and detention facilities in northeastern Syria.

GOVERNANCE

Iraq Prepares for National Elections in Fall

Iraq's Independent High Electoral Commission (IHEC), the government organization responsible for administering parliamentary elections, has begun preparing for the next national elections, which, according to State, must take place prior to November 25, 2025, as spelled out in Iraq's 2005 Constitution.³⁴⁷ IHEC has established more than 1,000 centers in Iraq's provinces to distribute voter cards and facilitate biometric registration. According to an IHEC spokesperson, IHEC will use its biometric ID system to verify voters' identity and could potentially use facial recognition technology as a backup for voters whose fingerprints were poorly captured or too worn to be recognized. In addition, IHEC has begun an analysis

According to the Central Bank of Iraq, as reported to State, the Iraqi government's excessive operational spending has increased internal debt and weakened the government's ability to finance capital projects.

of its electoral devices and software and is expected to set a date for the polls in consultation with the Iraqi President and the Iraqi government.³⁴⁸

In January, the Supreme Judicial Council extended the term of the IHEC until 2027. A subsequent Iraqi parliament vote confirmed the court's extension and added approximately \$250 million to IHEC's budget.³⁴⁹

Media reports continued to speculate that some Coordination Framework coalition leaders may wish to alter elements of the Election Law in order to gain advantage over Prime Minister al-Sudani in the elections.³⁵⁰

Iraqi Kurds Continue Efforts to Form a Government

The leaders of the Iraqi Kurdistan Region's two dominant political parties continued efforts to form a new regional government 6 months after regional parliamentary elections resulted in no clear winner.³⁵¹

Media outlets reported that the Kurdistan Democratic Party (KDP) and the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (PUK) made progress toward government formation. A PUK spokesperson said the parties' negotiating teams had "narrowed 90 percent of their differences," and the final 10 percent would be resolved during conversations between Prime Minister Masrour Barzani of the KDP and the PUK's Bafel Talabani. The PUK spokesperson said that the KDP and the PUK had reached an agreement on three KDP core demands: a unified political framework encompassing a single parliament, a single government, and a unified Peshmerga force.³⁵²

According to State, the IKR parliamentarians are eager to form the regional government before the national parliamentary elections are held this coming Fall.³⁵³ The IKR parliament's media advisor said the first session of the IKR parliament would be held once KDP and PUK political bureaus finalize the government formation agreement, media reported. As of the end of the quarter, a final agreement had not been reached.³⁵⁴

ECONOMIC GROWTH

Iraq's Final 2025 Budget Not Approved

As the quarter ended, the Iraqi government and parliament had not finalized a 2025 budget and continued to address unresolved issues. State said no progress was made during the quarter.³⁵⁵ According to media reports, there was an understanding between the Iraqi government and parliament that the final budget tables would be sent to parliament by the end of March. Although the parliament approved a budget law covering FYs 2023 to 2025, the legislative body still needs to approve the spending tables. Issues between the Iraqi government and the KRG, including disputes over oil produced in the IKR and transfer payments from federal Iraq to the KRG, remain to be resolved.³⁵⁶

According to the Central Bank of Iraq, as reported to State, the Iraqi government's excessive operational spending has increased internal debt and weakened the government's ability to finance capital projects.³⁵⁷ To finance the resulting deficit in the capital budget, on March 20, the Ministry of Finance and the Central Bank of Iraq opened the sale of \$2.3 billion in Iraqi

Treasury bonds to licensed banks. The bonds will be traded on the Iraqi Stock Exchange.³⁵⁸ State said the Iraqi government has a consistent liquidity crunch, and the bond sales are needed to increase cash reserves to cover government salaries.³⁵⁹

Iraq Oil Revenues Fall, Miss Budget Target

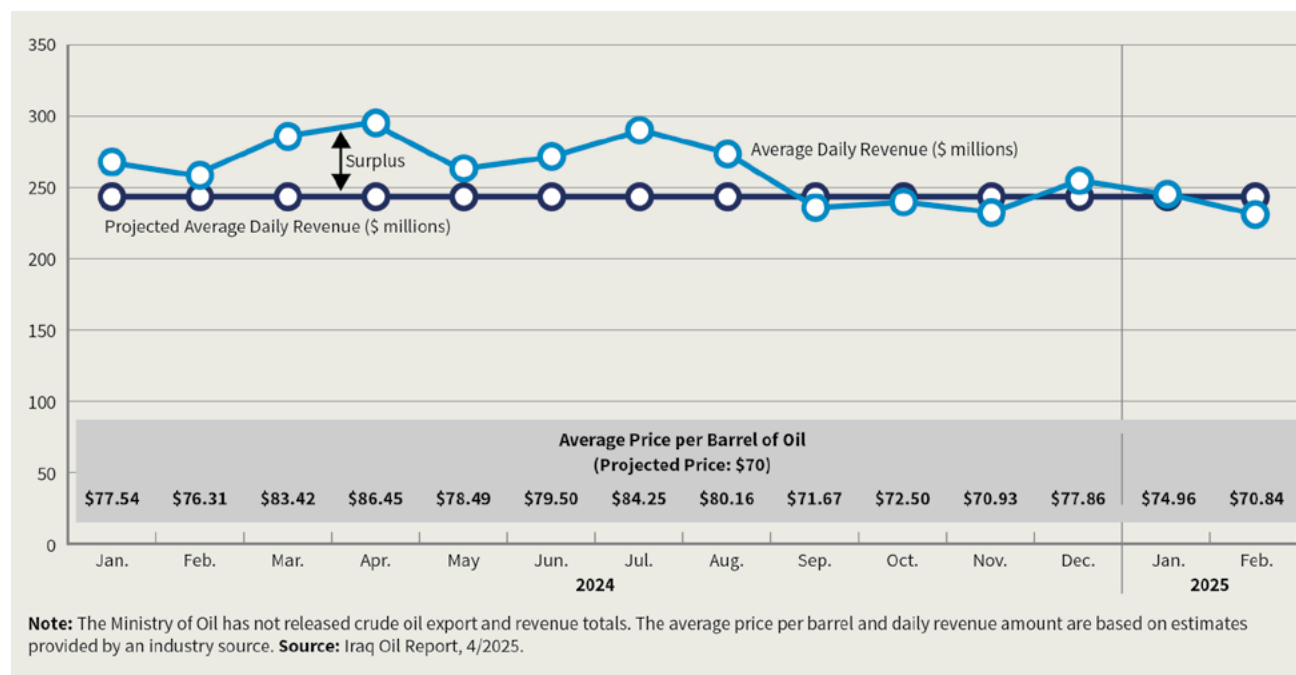
Iraq's January and February oil revenues fell below the target for average daily revenues set by the federal budget. (See Figure 4.) The drop in February revenues was anticipated following a late January explosion at a Rumaila oil field causing a drop of around 100,000 barrels per day following strong production numbers in January.³⁶⁰

Throughout the quarter, media outlets reported that oil shipments would soon resume in the Iraq-Türkiye pipeline from northern Iraq and the IKR to Türkiye's Ceyhan port on the Mediterranean. In March 2023, Iraq shut off the pipeline after winning an arbitration case against Türkiye.³⁶¹

The U.S. Government has continued to press Iraq to reopen the pipeline as an element of Iraq's goal to become energy independent. During a February 25 call, Secretary of State Marco Rubio and Prime Minister Mohammed Shia al-Sudani discussed the importance of the pipeline and the need to reopen it quickly. At a mid-March briefing, State's spokesperson said the United States continued to urge Iraq to resume oil exports through the pipeline.³⁶² In addition, the Iraqi parliament passed a budget law amendment to help restart the Iraq-Türkiye pipeline.³⁶³ At the end of the quarter, State said the pipeline remained closed.³⁶⁴

Figure 4.

Actual vs. Projected Daily Oil Revenue, January 2024–February 2025



The United States Ends Sanction Waiver for Iraq to Purchase Iranian Electricity


On March 9, during a telephone call with Prime Minister al-Sudani, U.S. National Security Advisor Michael Waltz confirmed that the United States would not extend the waiver for Iraq to purchase electricity from Iran beyond March 8. According to a media report, Mr. Waltz told the prime minister the decision to end the waiver was part of the U.S. “maximum pressure” policy toward Iran.³⁶⁵

To complicate matters, as of March, Iran had reduced its natural gas shipments to Iraq, as usual during winter, as it faced its own power shortfalls.³⁶⁶ Media outlets reported that Iraqi government officials moved quickly to find new sources of natural gas to reduce Iraq’s dependency on Iran for gas to generate electricity. The Iraqi government decided to complete “as soon as possible” the gas transmission line from Basrah power plants in southern Iraq to two floating storage regasification units by early June.³⁶⁷ However, the floating storage will most likely not be completed until sometime in early 2026 according to the lead contractor.³⁶⁸ The floating units will hold liquified natural gas that will be converted to gas. In addition, Iraq was in negotiations with Turkmenistan to buy gas to be delivered via a pipeline across Iran.³⁶⁹ This swap will only result in enough gas to provide 1.5 gigawatts (GW) of electricity. Iraq’s electricity demand was 50 GW in the summer of 2024 while the Iraqi government produced 27 GW, a record production level at the time.³⁷⁰

On March 16, Iraq’s Ministry of Electricity issued a statement that it had completed all logistical and infrastructure steps to double its electricity imports from Türkiye to deliver 600 megawatts of electricity. According to a media report, the Turkish Minister of Electricity said delivery of the increased electricity would begin “in the coming months.”³⁷¹







A Norwegian Army service member reloads his weapon during a live fire exercise near Al Asad Air Base, Iraq. (U.S. Army photo)

APPENDICES

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APPENDIX A

Classified Appendix to this Report

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

APPENDIX B

About the Lead Inspector General

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

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

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

The Lead IG agencies collectively carry out 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.

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 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.

APPENDIX C

Methodology for Preparing this Lead IG Quarterly Report

This report complies with section 419 of the Inspector General Act of 1978, as amended (codified at 5 U.S.C. sections 401-424), which requires that the designated Lead IG provide a quarterly report, available to the public, on each overseas contingency operation, and is consistent with the requirement that a biannual report be published by the Lead IG on the activities of the Inspectors General with respect to that overseas contingency operation. The Chair of the Council of the Inspectors General for Integrity and Efficiency designated the DoD IG as the Lead IG for OIR. The State IG is the Associate IG for the operation.

This report covers the period from January 1, 2025, through March 31, 2025. The three Lead IG agencies—DoD OIG, State OIG, and USAID OIG—and partner oversight agencies contributed the content of this report.

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

INFORMATION COLLECTION FROM AGENCIES AND OPEN SOURCES

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

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

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

APPENDIX D

Completed Oversight Projects

Between January 1 and March 31, 2025, the Lead IG and partner agencies issued one oversight report related to OIR. Completed reports by the Lead IG agencies are available on their respective web pages.

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

Iraq Economic Development: USAID/Iraq Addressed Compliance Issues but Failed to Monitor Progress Toward Program Goals

8-267-25-001-P; March 18, 2025

USAID OIG conducted this audit to assess the extent to which the USAID Mission in Iraq (USAID Iraq) monitored the Business Competitiveness and Job Creation Initiative's (the Initiative) efforts to achieve its goals. To do so, USAID OIG evaluated the extent to which USAID Iraq had processes in place to identify and correct compliance issues, monitored required performance indicators, and used its third-party monitor to track performance outcomes.

Since 2003, USAID has assisted Iraq in strengthening and diversifying its economy, including boosting the private sector to create jobs and businesses. USAID and State developed a joint strategy for the Middle East and North Africa with six interconnected goals, two of which address regional security and strengthening economic growth. In Iraq, these efforts include diversifying the country's economy and boosting the private sector. USAID/Iraq had four active projects contributing to these economic development goals, the largest being the Durable Communities and Economic Opportunities project. One of the main components of the project was the Business Competitiveness and Job Creation Initiative (the Initiative), which aimed to foster economic growth, job creation, and business development. The Initiative, which started in June 2020, sought to secure \$25 million in investments and create over 3,000 jobs.

USAID OIG found that USAID Iraq ensured that compliance issues identified by its third-party monitor were corrected. The mission used its third-party monitor to assess and report on compliance issues, such as branding and marking, during regular site visits. USAID OIG determined that the nine compliance issues identified by the third-party monitor were adequately addressed by USAID Iraq.

However, USAID OIG found that USAID Iraq failed to monitor some contractually required performance indicators. USAID Iraq ensured that the contractor reported results of the nine required performance indicators in FY 2021 but failed to ensure that the contractor reported results for six of the nine indicators in FY 2022 and 2023. As a result, the mission missed an opportunity to gauge the Initiative's progress towards its economic development goals.

USAID OIG also found that USAID Iraq did not use its third-party monitor to gauge programmatic performance. USAID Iraq did not use its third-party monitor to conduct performance monitoring for the Initiative and failed to implement other mechanisms to fill gaps in performance monitoring. For example, USAID Iraq did not have mission staff conduct site visits to provide oversight of the activity, inspect implementation progress, or verify monitoring data. In addition, USAID Iraq did not contract with another third-party monitor that could better meet its performance monitoring needs. Instead, the mission used its third-party monitor to focus

on the contractor’s compliance with USAID policies and regulations on branding and marking and environmental standards. Without regular performance monitoring, USAID Iraq lacked the information needed to assess progress toward the Initiative’s goals and make informed decisions about resource allocations.

USAID OIG made two recommendations to improve and strengthen USAID Iraq’s contract and project monitoring processes. The mission agreed with both recommendations and took corrective action to implement them.

The recommendations are closed.

APPENDIX E

Ongoing Oversight Projects

Tables 14 and 15 list the titles and objectives for Lead IG and partner agencies’ ongoing oversight projects related to OIR.

Table 14.

Ongoing Oversight Projects Related to OIR by Lead IG Agencies, as of March 31, 2025

DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE OFFICE OF INSPECTOR GENERAL
<p>Audit of DoD Reimbursement from the State of Kuwait in Accordance with the Defense Cooperation Agreement</p> <p>To determine whether the DoD requested and received reimbursement from the State of Kuwait for services provided by the DoD in accordance with the Defense Cooperation Agreement.</p>
<p>Audit of the DoD’s Management of the Counter-Islamic State of Iraq and Syria Train and Equip Fund (CTEF) Program Resources for Detention Facilities and Displaced Persons Camps</p> <p>To assess the effectiveness of the DoD’s management of CTEF program resources for the improvement of security and humane conditions at detention facilities and displaced persons camps for Islamic State of Iraq and Syria detainees.</p>
DEPARTMENT OF STATE OFFICE OF INSPECTOR GENERAL
<p>Audit of the Department of State’s Efforts to Counter Iran-Backed Groups</p> <p>To determine whether State’s efforts to counter Iran-backed groups have been 1) strategically developed and implemented with goals and objectives; 2) executed to promote coordination among implementing bureaus, posts, and interagency partners; and 3) designed to measure performance results and inform adjustments in its approach.</p>
<p>Inspection of Embassy Ankara, Türkiye, and Constituent Posts</p> <p>To evaluate the programs and operations of the U.S. Embassy in Ankara, Türkiye, and constituent posts.</p>
<p>Classified Inspection of Embassy Ankara, Türkiye, and Constituent Posts</p> <p>To evaluate the programs and operations of the U.S. Embassy in Ankara, Türkiye, and constituent posts.</p>
U.S. AGENCY FOR INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT OFFICE OF INSPECTOR GENERAL
<p>Audit of USAID’s Management of the Bureau for Humanitarian Assistance Warehouse in the United Arab Emirates</p> <p>To determine the extent to which USAID has designed and implemented policies, procedures, and practices to manage humanitarian assistance supplies warehoused in the United Arab Emirates for deployment worldwide.</p>

Table 15.

Ongoing Oversight Project Related to OIR by Lead IG Partner Agencies, as of March 31, 2025

ARMY AUDIT AGENCY

Audit of International Cooperative Administrative Support Services Program

To determine whether program reimbursement payments for International Cooperative Administrative Support Services were correct and supported, including U.S. Army Central (ARCENT) and Combined Joint Task Force-Operation Inherent Resolve (CJTF-OIR).

APPENDIX F
Planned Oversight Projects

Table 16 lists the title and objective for Lead IG and partner agencies’ ongoing oversight projects related to OIR.

Table 16.

Planned Oversight Project Related to OIR by Lead IG Partner Agencies, as of March 31, 2025

ARMY AUDIT AGENCY

Audit of Base Operations Services at Area Support Groups Jordan and Kuwait

To determine if area support groups Jordan and Kuwait provided base operations services according to mission needs.



APPENDIX G

Hotline and Investigations

HOTLINE ACTIVITY

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

During the quarter, the DoD OIG Hotline referred 42 cases related to OIR to Lead IG agencies and other investigative organizations. In some instances, a case may contain multiple subjects and allegations. State OIG received 55 allegations and referred 46 cases and USAID OIG received 59 allegations. Most allegations during the reporting period related to personal misconduct, criminal allegations, procurement and contract administration and security.

INVESTIGATIONS

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

During this quarter, investigative branches of the Lead IG agencies and their partner agencies ended the quarter with 36 open investigations, while 11 investigations were closed. No referrals were made to the Department of Justice during this quarter.

The Lead IG agencies and their partners coordinate investigative activities, deconflict potential or common targets, and interact for logistical and legal support. The investigative partner agencies consist of representatives from DCIS, State OIG, USAID OIG, the U.S. Army Criminal Investigation Division, the Naval Criminal Investigative Service, the Air Force Office of Special Investigations, and the Federal Bureau of Investigation.



ACRONYMS

Acronym	
BHA	USAID Bureau for Humanitarian Assistance
CJTF-OIR	Combined Joint Task Force–Operation Inherent Resolve
CMS	Case management system
CTEF	Counter-ISIS Train and Equip Fund
CTS	Counterterrorism Service
DAANES	Democratic Autonomous Administration of North and East Syria
DCIS	Defense Criminal Investigative Service
DIA	Defense Intelligence Agency
DoD	Department of Defense
ERW	explosive remnants of war
EUM	end-use monitoring
FY	fiscal year
GW	gigawatt
HaD	Hurras al-Din
HIS	Homeland Security Investigations
HTS	Hayat Tahrir al-Sham
IAMG	Iran-aligned militia groups
IHEC	Independent High Electoral Commission
IDP	internally displaced person
IKR	Iraqi Kurdistan Region
IOM	International Organization for Migration
ISF	Iraqi Security Forces
ISIS	Islamic State in Iraq and Syria
ISR	intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance
ITP	Iraq–Türkiye Pipeline
JOCAT-N	Joint Operations Command Advisor Team–North
JOC-I	Joint Operations Command–Iraq
KCL	Kurdish Coordination Line
KDP	Kurdistan Democratic Party
KRG	Kurdistan Regional Government

Acronym	
LIG	Lead Inspector General
MERV	Middle Euphrates River Valley
MoE	Ministry of Energy
MoMD	Ministry of Migration and Displacement
MoPA	Ministry of Peshmerga Affairs
NGO	nongovernmental organization
OIG	Office of Inspector General
OIR	Operation Inherent Resolve
OPCW	Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons
OUSD(P)	Office of the Under Secretary of Defense for Policy
PKK	Kurdistan Workers’ Party
PMF	Popular Mobilization Forces
PRM	State Bureau of Population, Refugees, and Migration
PUK	Patriotic Union of Kurdistan
RGB	Regional Guard Brigade
SDC	Syrian Democratic Council
SDF	Syrian Democratic Forces
SFA	Syrian Free Army
SNA	Syrian National Army
State	Department of State
Treasury	Department of the Treasury
UAS	Unmanned aerial systems
UN	United Nations
UNICEF	UN Children’s Agency
USAID	U.S. Agency for International Development
USCENTCOM	The U.S. Central Command
WHO	World Health Organization
YPG	SDF People’s Protection Units
YPJ	SDF Women’s Protection Units

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