

LEAD INSPECTOR GENERAL REPORT TO THE UNITED STATES CONGRESS



OPERATION INHERENT RESOLVE

AND OTHER U.S. GOVERNMENT ACTIVITIES RELATED TO

IRAQ & SYRIA



JULY 1, 2025–DECEMBER 31, 2025



On the cover: U.S. Airmen prepare to load GBU-31 munition systems onto F-15E Strike Eagles in support of Operation Hawkeye Strike in December 2025. (U.S. Air Force 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 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. 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. Due to the 2025 government shutdown, this report covers two quarters: from July 1 through December 31, 2025.

Handwritten signature of Platte B. Moring, III in black ink.

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Development





A U.S. Army Infantryman fires an M240B machine gun in Syria. (U.S. Army photo)

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A U.S. Air Force chaplain prays over an A-10 Thunderbolt II at a base in the USCENTCOM area of responsibility, in support of Operation Hawkeye Strike. (U.S. Air Force photo)

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Combined Joint Task Force-Operation Inherent Resolve (CJTF-OIR) concluded its mission in federal Iraq; further consolidation in Syria remained conditions based.

CJTF-OIR completed the handover of its Union III headquarters to NATO Mission-Iraq in November and Al Asad Air Base to the Iraqi government in December.¹ CJTF-OIR's remaining forces in Iraq are in its Kurdish region supporting the pivot of the OIR mission toward Syria. The OIR headquarters now has elements in Kuwait and in Erbil in the Iraqi Kurdistan Region.² As of the end of December, the United States retained four bases in Syria, handover of which would depend on security conditions in Syria, particularly at ISIS detention facilities.³

U.S. responded with Operation Hawkeye Strike after two U.S. Soldiers and an American interpreter are killed in insider attack in December. The operation included 70 U.S. strikes by fighter aircraft, attack helicopters, and artillery.⁴ U.S. forces temporarily moved joint fires assets to Syria to support the operation.⁵ Operation Hawkeye Strike resulted in 25 ISIS members removed from the battlefield and numerous ISIS support sites destroyed.⁶

The Syrian government joined the Global Coalition to Defeat ISIS and U.S. security engagement deepened with president Ahmed al-Shara'a's visit to the White House in November.⁷ The United States and Syria developed new coordination and communication mechanisms to collaborate on counter-ISIS operations, including a new Damascus Coordination Center led by CJTF-OIR.⁸ Congress officially repealed Caesar Act sanctions on Syria on December 18, opening a pathway to broader U.S. engagement.⁹

Integration of the Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) into the Syrian government was at an impasse. Little progress was made on the March 10 agreement between the Syrian government and the SDF to integrate SDF forces into the new Syrian security forces.¹⁰ In response, the Syrian government launched an offensive in January that captured SDF-held territory in Aleppo and the majority of SDF-held territory in northeastern Syria.¹¹ Despite a ceasefire to negotiate the handover of ISIS detention facilities and displaced persons camps and demobilize the SDF, tensions continued.¹²

CJTF-OIR concluded advisory and enabling support to Iraqi Security Forces (ISF) in federal Iraq.¹³ In October, CJTF-OIR led a validation exercise with the Iraqi Joint Operations Center to certify their ability to conduct independent airstrikes, a necessary





capability that enabled the conclusion of CJTF-OIR’s advisory mission in federal Iraq.¹⁴ Only a small bridge team remained to enable future bilateral security advisement on a normalized basis through the U.S. Embassy in Baghdad.¹⁵

Iraq conducted a successful parliamentary election in November, but a new government was yet to form.¹⁶ The election results were ratified and a new Iraqi parliament was seated in December, but has not yet named a president and prime minister.¹⁷ Secretary of State Marco Rubio stated that future progress on a U.S. bilateral security relationship with Iraq depends upon the disposition of the new Iraqi government and its willingness to confront malign Iranian influence.¹⁸ With the end of the CJTF-OIR mission in federal Iraq, responsibility for negotiating future bilateral security agreements now rests with the U.S. Military Group-Iraq and the Senior Defense Official/Defense Attaché with the U.S. Embassy in Baghdad.¹⁹

Rival Kurdish parties failed to form a new Kurdistan Regional Government or agree on a new Iraqi president, contributing to impasse on Peshmerga reforms.²⁰ Partisan disputes between the two largest Iraqi Kurdish political parties have prevented the formation of a new government over a year after its elections. These parties also failed to agree on a candidate to become the next Iraqi president, a role that has traditionally been Kurdish since 2003.²¹ Despite pronouncements that Peshmerga reforms would be completed by the end of the year, partisan disputes over funding and the composition of Area Commands were not resolved by the end of the reporting period.²² The Memorandum of Understanding on Peshmerga Reform between the United States and the Kurdish Regional Government set a goal for Peshmerga Reform to be completed in 2026.²³

**USCENTCOM
Commander Admiral
Brad Cooper
meets with Syrian
President Ahmed
al-Shara’a at the
Presidential Palace in
Damascus, Syria, on
September 12, 2025.
(USCENTCOM photo)**



OIR Mission Uncertain as Syrian Government Seizes SDF Territory

In mid-January—after the July to December period covered by this report—Syrian government forces seized areas of northeastern Syria controlled by the Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF). The offensive followed 9 months of U.S.-supported negotiations to integrate the SDF—the primary U.S. counter-ISIS partner in Syria—into the new Syrian government and left many aspects of the OIR mission in Syria in question.²⁴

U.S. relationship with the SDF: The U.S. Special Envoy to Syria, Ambassador Thomas J. Barrack Jr., said on social media that “the original purpose of the SDF as the primary anti-ISIS force on the ground has largely expired, as Damascus is now both willing and positioned to take over security responsibilities.”²⁵ He said that the U.S. focus is securing prisons holding ISIS prisoners and facilitating SDF integration into the Syrian government.²⁶ Amid the shifting relationships, some U.S. lawmakers expressed concern about the fragility of the counter-ISIS fight in Syria.²⁷

The Syrian government, with support from Arab tribal militias, had seized most of northeastern Syria, including the country’s largest oil fields.

Securing detention facilities and displaced persons camps: Syrian government forces overran SDF-run detention facilities and displaced persons camps holding ISIS fighters. This included the Shaddadi detention facility and the al-Hol displaced persons camp, where U.S. officials have warned that ongoing ISIS ideology and radicalization risked the group’s resurgence with a new generation. An uncertain number of former ISIS fighters escaped detention during the fighting.²⁸ As SDF forces withdrew, the Syrian government began to assert administrative control over the detention facilities in those areas as well as the al-Hol displaced persons camp, but the fate of the camps and facilities remained in flux.²⁹

The SDF accused U.S. forces of failing to answer their calls for help securing prisoners or to come through on assurances to help move other detainees to secure locations as fighting advanced, according to media reporting. The Syrian government accused the SDF of releasing detainees.³⁰ On January 21, the U.S. Central Command (USCENTCOM) announced it was beginning the transfer of as many as 7,000 ISIS detainees to Iraq to ensure they remain secured.³¹ As of February 3, USCENTCOM had transferred approximately 2,000 detainees to Iraq.³²

Negotiations to integrate the SDF into the Syrian government: On January 18, following the launch of the government offensive and after a day of battling the SDF, the Syrian government announced that it had reached a ceasefire and a 14-point deal to integrate the SDF fully into the Syrian government.³³ However, the SDF rejected the deal and called on supporters to mobilize and “join the resistance,” to continue fighting the government offensive.³⁴

As fighting continued, the Syrian government, with support from Arab tribal militias, seized most of northeastern Syria, including the country’s largest oil fields.³⁵ By January 20, only pockets of SDF control remained in Kurdish-majority areas of Hasakah governorate and in the Ain al-Arab region around the strategically and symbolically important city of Kobani in Aleppo governorate.³⁶ (See Figure 1.)

(continued on next page)

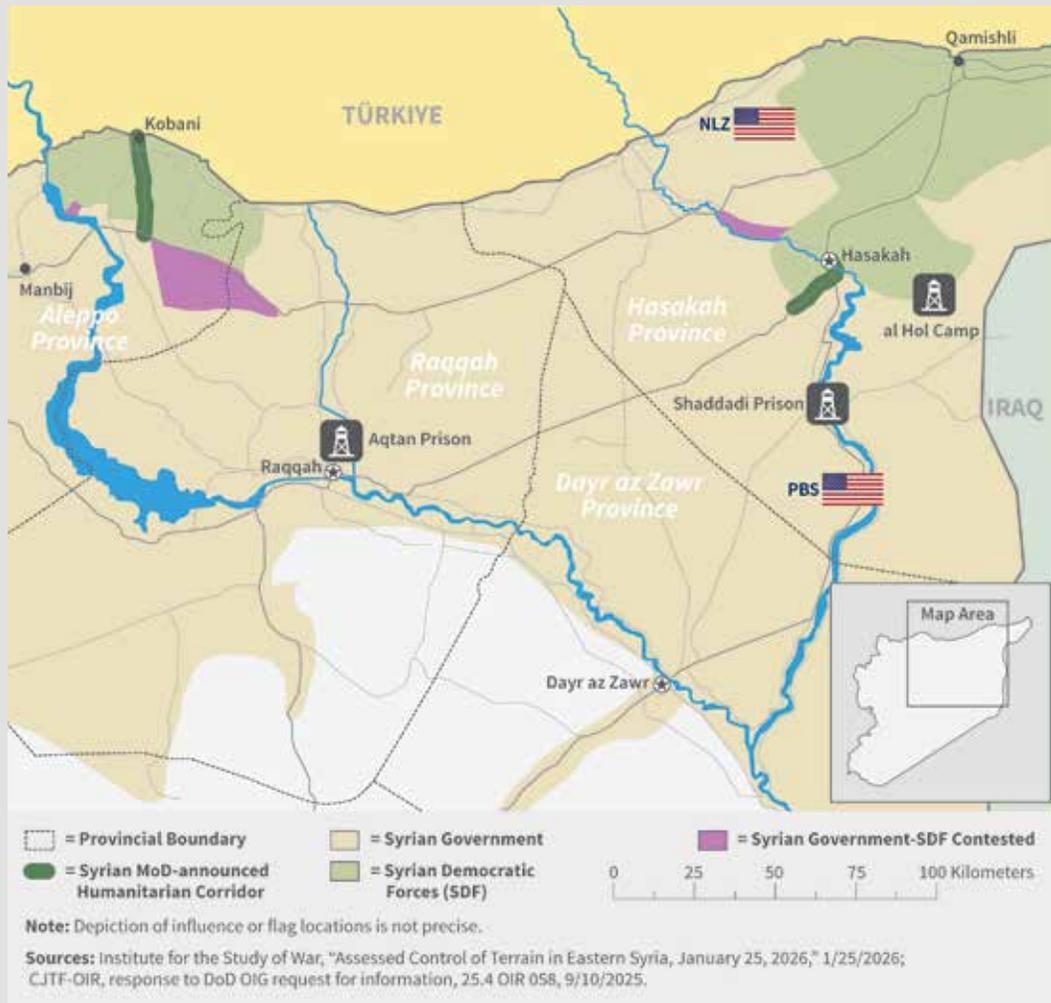
OIR Mission Uncertain as Syrian Government Seizes SDF Territory *(continued from previous page)*

The Syrian government announced a 4-day ceasefire on January 20 for the SDF to develop an integration plan for Hasakah governorate that would allow for government forces not to enter the cities of Hasakah and Qamishli but to remain on the outskirts.³⁷ On January 24, the government extended the ceasefire for an additional 15 days. This was to allow the U.S. military to transfer ISIS detainees to Iraq and for the SDF to agree on terms of integration and demobilization.³⁸

As Syrian forces advanced around U.S. bases remaining in northeastern Syria, the Syrian government said that it would work with the United States to establish security and continue counter-ISIS operations.³⁹

Figure 1.

Territorial Control in Northeastern Syria, as of January 25, 2026









An U.S. Army AH-64 Apache Attack Helicopter prepares to support Operation Hawkeye Strike on December 19, 2025. (U.S. Army photo)

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A U.S. Army Soldier provides security in support of CJTF-OIR. (U.S. Army photo)

MISSION UPDATE

OVERVIEW

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 Syria, and to set conditions for long-term security cooperation frameworks with partners in those countries.⁴⁰ Combined Joint Task Force-Operation Inherent Resolve (CJTF-OIR) executes the OIR mission and comprises forces from 21 countries.⁴¹ CJTF-OIR is a component of the 90-member U.S.-led Global Coalition to Defeat ISIS.⁴² The OIR campaign has three Lines of Effort.⁴³ (See Table 1.)

OIR TRANSITION

In September 2024, the U.S. and Iraqi governments announced a framework to end the military mission of the Global Coalition to Defeat ISIS in Iraq.⁴⁴ The CJTF-OIR military mission inside Iraq formally concluded with the relocation of the CJTF-OIR

Table 1.

OIR Lines of Effort

LOE 1:

Deny ISIS within the Combined Joint Operating Area

LOE 2:

Build Partner Force Capability and Capacity

LOE 3:

Sustain the Global Coalition

Source: CJTF-OIR, response to DoD OIG request for information, 25.4 OIR 003, 9/10/2025.

headquarters from Baghdad to Erbil and Kuwait.⁴⁵ As of the end of December, the DoD planned to continue counter-ISIS operations in Syria, supported from Iraq, through at least September 2026.⁴⁶ CJTF-OIR paused the simultaneous consolidation of bases in Syria due to the “fluid nature” of the United States’ relationship with the new Syrian government and conditions on the ground.⁴⁷

Iraq: CJTF-OIR continued to reduce its forces in Iraq and consolidate at Erbil and the Greater Baghdad Area. The United States transferred control of the Union III base in Baghdad to NATO Mission-Iraq.⁴⁸ Special operations forces under Combined Special Operations Joint Task Force-Central (CSOJTF-C)—a special operations task force that executes partnered counter-ISIS operations in Iraq and Syria in support of CJTF-OIR—redeployed without replacement from Al Asad Air Base (AAAB) in Anbar province and two smaller outstations near Mosul in July.⁴⁹ The last U.S. forces departed AAAB in January and the Iraqi government announced that its forces now control the air base and have independent responsibility for security in Anbar province.⁵⁰

The Office of the Under Secretary of Defense for Policy (OUSD(P)) reported that the United States and Iraq made progress toward a long-term bilateral security relationship. The two countries discussed how U.S. forces will continue to advise, assist, and enable the Iraqi Security Forces (ISF) in a reduced capacity and build on Iraq’s increased counterterrorism capabilities.⁵¹

In September, DoD personnel at the U.S. Embassy in Baghdad assumed responsibility for discussions on bilateral security arrangements from CJTF-OIR.⁵² The United States and Iraq held technical consultations in Baghdad in November on a future bilateral security relationship and issued a joint statement on their commitment to continued consultations, but no new bilateral security agreements were concluded during the reporting period.⁵³

Syria: CJTF-OIR closed one base in northeastern Syria and said that, as of January, conditions were not yet met for further base closures.⁵⁴ This followed the closure of three bases earlier in 2025, ending permanent Coalition basing in the lower Middle Euphrates River Valley (MERV). As of the end of the December, three U.S. bases remained open in northeastern Syria, as did the At Tanf Garrison further south.⁵⁵

As a result of the consolidation, U.S. forces that were previously distributed across northeastern Syria concentrated in operational hubs such as Northern Landing Zone (NLZ).⁵⁶ As of the end of December, U.S. forces continued to conduct joint counterterrorism operations and training with their Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) partners from NLZ.⁵⁷ CJTF-OIR said that by consolidating special operations units from outstations in northeastern Syria, it was able to maintain “a robust presence” while optimizing resource allocation and reducing risk associated with providing logistical support to bases in the MERV region.⁵⁸

However, CJTF-OIR reported that the greater distance from partner forces created by the consolidation challenged its ability to quickly respond to emerging threats and provide timely support to partner forces, particularly in the event of an escape from a detention facility or an attack on oil infrastructure. Resource reductions also limited rotary-wing support, reducing casualty evacuation range. The added distance created fewer opportunities for routine contact.⁵⁹

FUNDING

The Office of the Under Secretary of Defense (Comptroller) reported that of the approximately \$11.5 billion enacted for OIR in FY 2024 and FY 2025, approximately \$9.5 billion had been obligated as of November 30, 2025.⁶⁰

Counter-ISIS Train and Equip Fund (CTEF): CTEF is the primary vehicle through which CJTF-OIR provided assistance to Syrian and Iraqi partner forces. Of the approximately \$622.7 billion enacted for CTEF Iraq requirements in FY 2024 and FY 2025, \$298.2 billion had been obligated as of December 31, 2025. Of the approximately \$249.2 billion enacted for CTEF Syria requirements during the same period, \$179.4 billion had been obligated as of the end of December.⁶¹ (See Table 2.) In 2026, the DoD redesignated \$1.5 million in remaining FY 2025 CTEF-Syria funds, moving \$5.0 million to CTEF-Jordan and \$13.5 million to CTEF-Lebanon.⁶² The DoD also obligated \$12.6 million in CTEF funds donated by the United Kingdom (\$12.3 million) and Kosovo (\$0.3 million) for improvements to detention facilities in Syria, State reported.⁶³

Foreign Military Financing (FMF): State said that it had obligated \$1.2 billion for FMF for Iraq from FY 2020 through FY 2025. State obligated \$65.4 million in FY 2025 FMF for Iraq. As of December 31, 2025, \$972.6 million (78 percent) of available funds had been spent.⁶⁴

THE ISIS THREAT

U.S. and Coalition forces continued to deny ISIS territorial gain and further disrupt its networks though residual ISIS cells remained motivated to regain strength and support in Iraq and Syria.⁶⁵ Independent analysts assessed in July that ISIS in Iraq and Syria retains remnants of its core of fighters and leaders from its ascendant period in 2014 to 2017. However, Iraq and Syria are no longer the center of gravity for ISIS leadership globally—this has moved to Africa and Central Asia—after the elimination of successive ranks of ISIS leaders.⁶⁶

Table 2.

CTEF Funding for Iraq, Syria, and Lebanon, \$ in Billions, as of December 31, 2025

	FY 2024/2025			FY 2025			FY 2026
	Enacted	Obligated	Disbursed	Enacted	Obligated	Disbursed	Requested
Iraq	\$242	\$215.5	\$183.1	\$380.8	\$82.7	\$9.1	\$212.5
Syria	102.8	95.2	73.3	146.4	84.2	5.9	130
Lebanon	3.2	2	0.5	1.5	—	—	15
TOTAL	\$348	\$312.7	\$256.9	\$528.7	\$166.9	\$15	\$357.5

Notes: No FY 2025 funds were disbursed under the continuing resolution as of November 30, 2025.

Source: OUSD(C), response to DoD OIG request for information, 26.1 OIR 013, 2/9/2026.

In response, U.S. and partner forces in Syria conducted operations during 2025 that resulted in more than 300 terrorists being detained and more than 20 killed.

The U.S. Central Command (USCENTCOM) noted that ISIS inspired at least 11 plots or attacks against targets in the United States in 2025. In response, U.S. and partner forces in Syria conducted operations during 2025 that resulted in more than 300 terrorists being detained and more than 20 killed.⁶⁷

Iraq: ISIS continued to focus on organizational survival. The Iraqi Security Forces (ISF) conducted sustained counter-ISIS operations and disrupted a plot to kill Shia religious pilgrims during the Arbaeen religious holiday in August, the Defense Intelligence Agency (DIA) reported.⁶⁸ In August, ISIS claimed an IED attack against an Iraqi Army patrol in Ninewa province that injured three Iraqi soldiers.⁶⁹ There were no other major ISIS attacks through the end of 2025. Due to the diminished presence of senior ISIS targets within Iraq, Iraqi counterterrorism forces were able to coordinate with Syrian security forces on counter-ISIS operations in Syria.⁷⁰

Syria: ISIS continued to exploit the security vacuum in Syria to reconstitute and organize low-level attacks. However, the DIA reported, sustained pressure by counterterrorism forces removed more key leaders during the reporting period and limited their mobility. A U.S. raid in July near Aleppo killed senior ISIS leader Dhiya Zawba Muslih al-Hardani and a raid in August killed a senior ISIS financier planning attacks in Iraq and Syria.⁷¹

ISIS networks in Syria operated primarily in urban areas—such as Dayr az Zawr, Damascus, and Aleppo—with a focus on undermining the new Syrian government and destabilizing Syria. It also sought to expand its influence into urban areas of northwestern Syria such as Idlib and Latakia.⁷² Elements outside of these major cities focused their attacks on the SDF, the DIA said.⁷³ A human rights monitor reported that ISIS conducted at least 241 attacks in SDF areas of Syria in 2025, killing 74 SDF soldiers.⁷⁴

OPERATION HAWKEYE STRIKE

In an insider attack on December 13, a gunman ambushed U.S. and Syrian security forces during a key leader engagement near Palmyra, killing two U.S. National Guardsmen and a U.S. civilian interpreter.⁷⁵ Three other U.S. Service members and two members of the Syrian security services were wounded. Syrian authorities confirmed that the gunman, who was killed during the ambush, was a member of the Syrian security services.⁷⁶

USCENTCOM responded to this attack with Operation Hawkeye Strike, commencing on December 19 with strikes on 70 known ISIS infrastructure and weapons storage sites, employing air strikes, attack helicopters, and artillery.⁷⁷ Expanded counter-ISIS operations in conjunction with Operation Hawkeye Strike have resulted in 25 ISIS members detained or killed as of the end of the reporting period, with more strikes and raids continuing into the new year.⁷⁸





U.S. Airmen prepare to load GBU-31 munition systems onto F-15E Strike Eagles in support of Operation Hawkeye Strike on December 18, 2025. (U.S. Air Force photo)

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SYRIA

At the end of the reporting period in December, the United States was continuing to develop a comprehensive policy for Syria one year after opposition forces toppled the Assad regime. The Office of the Under Secretary of Defense for Policy (OUSD(P)) said that the United States supported the Syrian government, advancing President Donald Trump’s vision of “giving Syria a chance.”⁷⁹ This included providing the Syrian leadership under President Ahmed al-Shara’a an opportunity to establish governance.⁸⁰

Syrian partners load ammunition into an M2HB machine gun during range operations. (U.S. Army photo)

Table 3.

The U.S. Government's Mission Goals for Syria

- Normalizing bilateral relationships with the Syrian government
- Integrating minorities into government security forces and civilian administration structures
- Advancing U.S. strategic and commercial equities in Syria by expanding access to U.S. firms and private sector engagement
- Preventing the return of Iranian influence
- Denying ISIS the conditions to reconstitute and again threaten the homeland
- Reducing the populations of al-Hol and reintegrating Syrian al-Hol residents into their communities

Source: State, response to State OIG request for information, 12/19/2025.

DIPLOMACY

United States Steps Up Diplomatic Engagement with Syria

Throughout 2025, the United States continued to develop its relationship with the new Syrian government. This culminated in a meeting between President al-Shara'a and President Trump at the White House on November 10, the first visit by a Syrian president to Washington, D.C., since 1946. Discussions addressed diplomatic, economic, and counterterrorism priorities, State reported.⁸¹ During his visit, President al-Shara'a met with Secretary of State Marco Rubio, Treasury Secretary Scott Bessent, and members of Congress.⁸² (See Table 4.)

State said that it continued to assess options for future diplomatic presence in Syria, including reopening the U.S. Embassy in Damascus.⁸³ In the interim, Czechia remained the United States' protecting power in Syria, providing limited emergency U.S. citizen services.⁸⁴ In July, Czech officials assisted in information sharing and coordinating messaging to U.S. citizens seeking evacuation assistance during the violent clashes that erupted in Suwayda province.⁸⁵

The Syria Regional Platform, located primarily in the U.S. Consulate in Istanbul, pursues U.S. policy priorities related to Syria, and falls under the leadership of Thomas Barrack, who is both U.S. Ambassador to Türkiye and the U.S. Special Envoy to Syria.⁸⁶ State reported that the platform continued to support U.S. diplomatic efforts, including periodic in-person diplomatic engagements in Damascus.⁸⁷

Table 4.

U.S. Diplomatic Engagement with Syria, July-December 2025

September 12: Ambassador Barrack and USCENTCOM Commander Admiral Brad Cooper visited Damascus—the first time a USCENTCOM commander visited the Syrian capital.

September 22: Secretary Rubio met with President al-Shara'a in New York to discuss U.S. priorities in Syria.

September 24: President al-Shara'a addressed the UN General Assembly, the first time a Syrian president addressed the body since 1967.

October 7: Ambassador Barrack and Admiral Cooper returned to Damascus to facilitate talks between Syrian President al-Shara'a and SDF leader General Mazloum.

November 10: Secretary Rubio met with Syrian Foreign Minister Asaad al-Shaibani and Turkish Foreign Minister Hakan Fidan in Washington, D.C. The three discussed efforts to locate missing Americans in Syria, counterterrorism efforts, and strengthening regional stability and security.

November 10: Secretary Rubio lifted legal restrictions on operations at the Syrian embassy in Washington, D.C., after 11 years of closure.

December 1-2: Ambassador Barrack continued discussions in Damascus on implementation of the March 10 agreement to integrate the SDF into the Syrian military.

Sources: Middle East Institute, video, "Admiral Brad Cooper, Commander of U.S. Central Command, Addresses MEI," 11/10/2025; State, response to State OIG request for information, 12/19/2025; State, press release, "Secretary Rubio's Meeting with Syrian Foreign Minister al-Shaibani and Turkish Foreign Minister Fidan," 11/10/2025; State, press release, "Secretary Rubio's Meeting with Syrian Foreign Minister al-Shaibani and Turkish Foreign Minister Fidan," 11/10/2025; Rania Abu Shamala, "U.S. Lifts all Legal Measures on Syrian Diplomatic Mission, Embassy in Washington: Foreign Minister," Anadolu Ajansi, 11/11/2025; State, response to State OIG request for information, 12/19/2025.

U.S. Secretary of State Marco Rubio meets with Syrian President Ahmed al-Shara'a in New York City on September 22, 2025. (State photo)



Syria Joins Global Coalition to Defeat ISIS

On November 10, Syria formally joined the U.S.-led Coalition to Defeat ISIS as its 90th member.⁸⁸ According to State, the addition of Syria allows the United States to better coordinate its stabilization and counterterrorism efforts and enables the Syrian government to speak directly to other Coalition members on their counterterrorism priorities and needs, so countries can better address and fill those security gaps.⁸⁹

By joining the Coalition, State said, the Syrian government aligned itself with the international community's mission to eradicate ISIS remnants.⁹⁰ State reported that Syria is now positioning itself as a partner for stability across the entire Levant, aligned not just against ISIS, but also against Hezbollah, Hamas, the Iranian Revolutionary Guard Corps and fragmented terrorist groups.⁹¹

U.S. Government Issues Sanctions Relief for Syria

On June 30, President Trump signed an executive order that terminated the Syria sanctions program while maintaining individual sanctions on Bashar al-Assad, his associates, human rights abusers, drug traffickers, persons linked to chemical weapons activities, ISIS or its affiliates, and Iranian proxies. The executive order also relaxed export controls on certain goods and waived restrictions on certain foreign assistance to Syria.⁹²

The United States also lifted key terrorism designations on Syrian government leaders. In July, the United States revoked the Foreign Terrorist Organization designation of al-Nusrah Front, also known as Hay'at Tahrir al-Sham.⁹³ In November, the United States de-listed Syrian President Ahmed al-Shara'a and Syrian Interior Minister Anas Khattab from domestic sanctions under the Specially Designated Global Terrorist list.⁹⁴

In December, Congress passed and the President signed a bill to repeal the Caesar Syria Civilian Protection Act.⁹⁵ The repeal offers greater clarity and flexibility for private sector actors to contribute to Syria's recovery and reconstruction, State reported.⁹⁶ In a joint statement, the Departments of Commerce, State, and Treasury said that the removal of U.S.

sanctions “supports Syria’s efforts to combat terrorism, rebuild its economy, and provide prosperity for all its citizens, including its ethnic and religious minorities.”⁹⁷

However, the United States maintained Syria’s State Sponsor of Terrorism designation.⁹⁸ This designation restricts U.S. foreign assistance, bans on defense exports and sales, and restricts exports of dual-use items, among other restrictions.⁹⁹ Combined Joint Task Force-Operation Inherent Resolve (CJTF-OIR) noted that this designation affects any potential CTEF support to the Syrian government as a potential counterterrorism partner.¹⁰⁰

As 2025 came to a close, Syria’s economy showed “signs of recovery,” the International Monetary Fund said.¹⁰¹ State reported that the United States engaged with international partners—including Jordan, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, and Türkiye—to support Syria’s economy.¹⁰² These countries announced several new investments in Syria, including a \$6.4 billion Saudi investment in infrastructure projects and Qatari and Turkish private investment in the Damascus International Airport.¹⁰³ The Syrian Petroleum Company signed agreements with foreign firms to develop gas and oil fields.¹⁰⁴ In late August, the government-owned Syrian Oil Company announced the country’s first oil exports in 14 years.¹⁰⁵

Syria Dismantles Narcotics Trafficking Network in Tartus

The Defense Intelligence Agency (DIA) reported that the Syrian government is postured to take action against captagon production and trafficking, almost certainly in an earnest effort to legitimize itself as a responsible state.¹⁰⁶ The Syrian government is training new recruits and retaining Assad-regime employees who have some counternarcotics experience, the DIA said, but the Syrian government forces lack presence throughout Syria—a weakness that smugglers and drug producers exploit.¹⁰⁷

On October 20, the Syrian government seized 12 million captagon pills in a raid, State reported.¹⁰⁸ On December 18, Syria’s counternarcotics branch in Tartus province dismantled a narcotics trafficking network, leading to arrests, seizure of captagon and other drugs, and confiscation of an undisclosed amount of currency.¹⁰⁹

State reported that its al-Rashad program previously provided support to the counternarcotics efforts in northeastern Syria. Support included both training for the Internal Security Forces on law enforcement responses to the illicit trade in narcotics and training for NGOs and health care professionals on drug rehabilitation techniques.¹¹⁰

U.S. IMMIGRATION CONTROLS ON SYRIA

On September 19, the U.S. Government announced the termination of Temporary Protected Status for an estimated 6,000 Syrians in the United States, citing improved conditions in Syria.¹¹¹ In November, a court ordered the administration to delay its termination of the protections for Syrians while the legal case challenging the decision moves forward.¹¹²

On December 16, President Trump made the determination to fully restrict and limit the entry of nationals of Syria to the United States, citing insufficient screening and vetting capability in Syria.¹¹³

SYRIAN GOVERNMENT

SDF-Syrian Government Tensions Mount as Progress on Integration Stalls

From July to September, sporadic clashes between the SDF and Syrian government forces reached a potentially dangerous escalation as negotiations over stalled SDF integration failed to find resolution.¹¹⁴ Clashes erupted in mid-December near the Tishreen Dam on the Euphrates River, disrupting a U.S.-brokered ceasefire that had been in place since April between the SDF and Turkish-backed Syrian National Army (SNA).¹¹⁵ SNA forces are now integrated into the Syrian military.¹¹⁶

Under a March 10 preliminary agreement, the SDF agreed in principle to join the Syrian government by the end of the year.¹¹⁷ However, negotiations stalled as the parties did not resolve key points over the integration of the SDF, which has an estimated 100,000 fighters and sought to retain its autonomy.¹¹⁸ The SDF demanded to keep its force intact and pressed for constitutional recognition of Kurdish rights, while the Syrian government demanded full central control of all Syrian territory.¹¹⁹

U.S. officials encouraged negotiations. On October 7, Ambassador Barrack and Admiral Cooper visited Damascus to facilitate talks between Syrian President al-Shara'a and SDF leader General Mazloum Abdi. During the visit, the Syrian government and the SDF agreed to accelerate implementation of the March 10 agreement. Following the visit, Mazloum met with the Syrian Defense Minister and agreed to a comprehensive ceasefire in north and northeastern Syria, State reported.¹²⁰ Ambassador Barrack returned in December to further urge SDF integration, State reported.¹²¹

Under a compromise proposal presented by the Syrian government in October, the SDF would reorganize into three divisions and smaller brigades, while ceding some chains of command to the Syrian government and opening some of its territory to other Syrian Army units to establish command centers in northeastern Syria and along border areas.¹²²

As the December 31 deadline for an SDF agreement on integration approached, a standoff between government and SDF forces in Aleppo and Raqqa threatened to escalate.¹²³ The Syrian government sent reinforcements and, according to media reports, Turkish officials said Türkiye would back a Syrian government offensive if the SDF did not integrate by year's end.¹²⁴ CJTF-OIR assessed that major military confrontations between the SDF and government forces would risk significant destabilization of Syria that could imperil the political position of both sides and provide openings for ISIS to reconstitute.¹²⁵

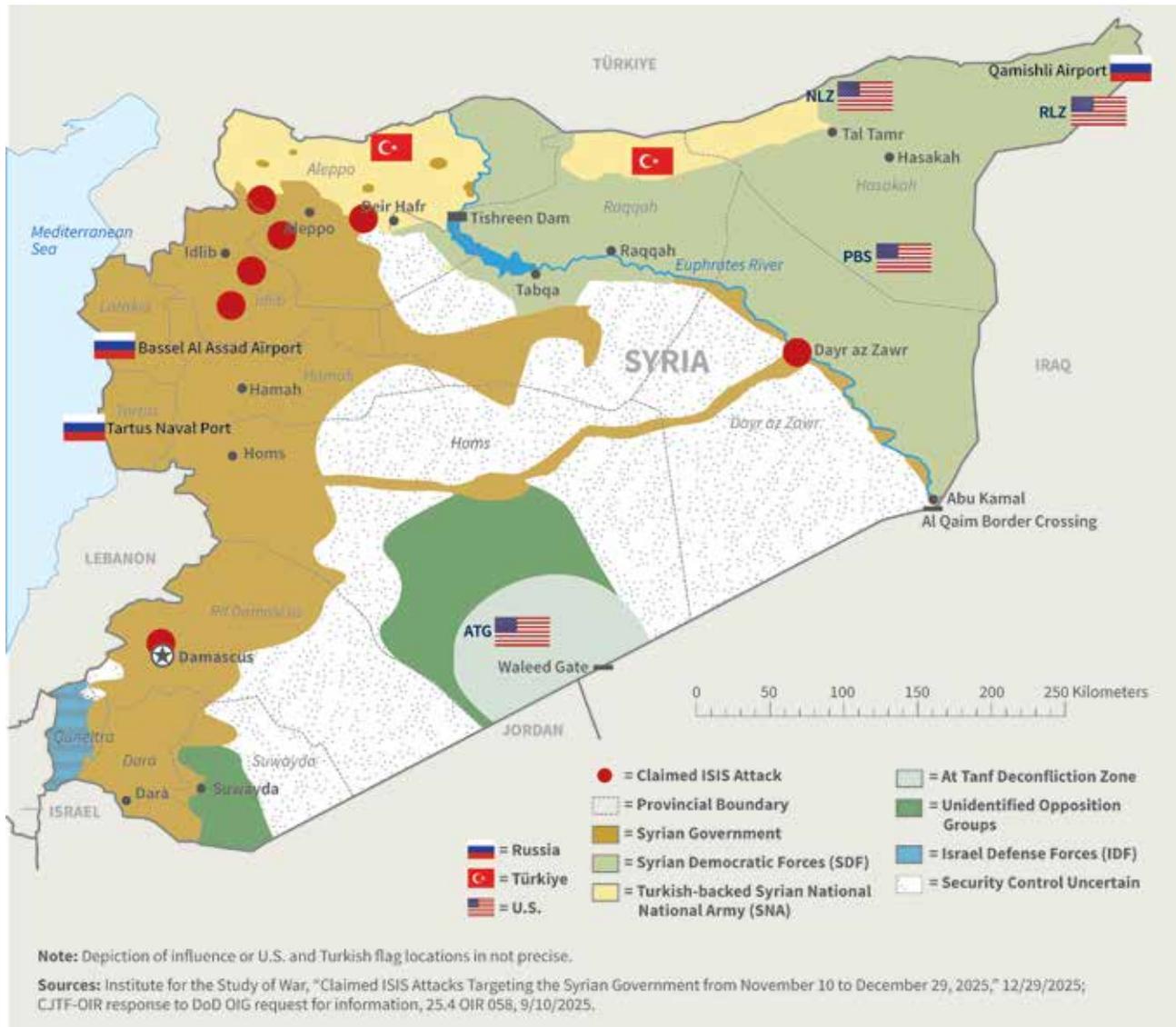
Instability Across Syria Highlights Syrian Government Limitations

The DIA reported that the Syrian government's inability to consolidate control over all Syrian territory, persuade resistant minority factions to integrate, and control all factions within its own security forces, are major factors impeding its ability to provide security throughout Syria.¹²⁶

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Figure 2.

Areas of Influence and Control in Syria, as of December 29, 2025



Suwayda: In July, fighting between Druze militia groups and Syrian government in southern Suwayda governorate killed as many as 2,000 people and displaced tens of thousands.¹²⁷ What started as sectarian clashes turned anti-government when government forces sent to defuse the tensions largely sided with the Bedouins (against the Druze).¹²⁸ During this period, Israel conducted at least 160 airstrikes in Syria, saying that it was intervening to protect the Druze and ensure the continued demilitarization of southern Syria.¹²⁹ According to media and human rights reports, the government forces were implicated in hundreds of extrajudicial killings of civilians, rape and other atrocities against the Druze.¹³⁰ Allegations of abuses by Druze fighters were reported on a smaller scale.¹³¹



Syrian partner soldiers practicing squad-level movement tactics. (U.S. Army photo)

In August, several Druze militias consolidated to form a “national guard” loyal to armed faction leader and senior Druze cleric Hikmat al-Hijri who advocated for Suwayda’s independence.¹³² In September, in partnership with the Syrian and Jordanian governments, Ambassador Barrack signed a “roadmap” that outlined a plan for security, accountability and reconciliation, called for enabling the flow of aid into Suwayda and promised an investigation into events in Suwayda.¹³³ Druze leadership rejected the proposal.¹³⁴

On October 27, the United States announced humanitarian funding for Bedouin, Christian, and Druze communities in Suwayda, to help 60,000 people with food, water, hygiene items, and infrastructure rebuilding—including the rehabilitation of houses and water systems, State reported.¹³⁵

Latakia: In December, clashes broke out in the coastal Latakia governorate after a deadly explosion at a mosque in a predominantly Alawite neighborhood in Homs killed eight people and led to widespread Alawite protests and counterdemonstrations. A Sunni Islamist militant group claimed responsibility for the attack.¹³⁶ On December 28, clashes turned violent, leading to three deaths and dozens of wounded, and sparking attacks on Alawite neighborhoods that damaged cars and vandalized shops. On December 30, Syrian government authorities imposed a curfew in Latakia and arrested 21 people it said were linked to the Assad regime.¹³⁷

Armed factions: President al-Shara’a also struggled to consolidate and control thousands of armed factions and foreign fighters who participated in the advance on Damascus and have now been absorbed into Syrian army ranks. The DIA reported that extremist foreign fighters were responsible for some abuses during outbreaks of sectarian violence in 2025.¹³⁸ This included a known al-Qaeda affiliated militia group that participated in attacks against Alawites during March fighting in Syria’s western coastal region, and again during fighting in Suwayda in July.¹³⁹

Meanwhile, on October 5, Syria held its first elections after the fall of the Assad regime. Syrians elected 122 of the 210 members of the People’s Assembly of Syria, State reported.¹⁴⁰ President al-Shara’a will appoint 70 seats. The remaining 19 seats for areas currently outside government control—Suwayda, Hasakah, and parts of Raqqa—remain open until similar elections can be held in those districts.¹⁴¹

REGIONAL TENSIONS

As the Syrian government asserted authority, regional and international actors continued to jockey for influence. Türkiye maintained significant influence in Syria and expanded its presence along the border. Russia’s presence was diminished, but it retained lingering influence in Syria.¹⁴²

U.S. Holds Israel-Syria Talks

Israeli and Syrian officials held U.S.-brokered talks for first time in 25 years, raising hopes that the two countries could navigate past heightened tensions.¹⁴³ According to media reports citing President al-Shara’a, the discussions included renewal of the 1974 disengagement agreement between the countries, Israel’s withdrawal from Syrian territory captured in the last year, and the return of UN peacekeepers to the demilitarized zone.¹⁴⁴

The talks occurred amid escalated Israeli assaults and military activities in Syria, including August strikes on the presidential palace and defense ministry in Damascus and other ground movements and incursions in southern Syria.¹⁴⁵ President al-Shara’a said Israel’s strikes in Damascus were an “act of war,” but Syria had no other option but to reach a security deal with Israel.¹⁴⁶



Syrian president Ahmed al-Shara’a addresses the UN General Assembly on September 24, 2025. (UN photo)

On January 6, following a resumption of paused U.S.-brokered Israel-Syria negotiations, State announced that Israel and Syria agreed to establish a “joint fusion mechanism”—a dedicated communication cell under U.S. supervision to facilitate intelligence sharing, military de-escalation and commercial opportunities.¹⁴⁷ State reported that Ambassador Barrack continued to convene Syrian and Israeli leadership to broker a security arrangement between the countries.¹⁴⁸

Türkiye Strengthens Ties with Syrian Government, Increases Pressure on SDF

Through the end of December, Türkiye engaged with the Syrian government through diplomacy and military support.¹⁴⁹ Türkiye signed a memorandum of understanding with the al-Shara’a government and formally began training and advising the Syrian Army.¹⁵⁰ According to State, Türkiye’s Ministry of National Defense planned to establish a war academy and non-commissioned officer schools in Syria—modeled on programs in Somalia and Libya—and to invite Syrian cadets to attend Turkish military schools.¹⁵¹ Türkiye also plans to provide Syrian personnel with commando and infantry training, State reported, citing media reporting.¹⁵²

Türkiye also increased pressure on the SDF to integrate into the Syrian government, according to media reports.¹⁵³ The Turkish military and its SNA proxies have maintained a force presence in northern Syria for years and conducted frequent attacks strikes to push the SDF from its border. Türkiye views the SDF as an offshoot of the Kurdistan Workers’ Party (PKK), a U.S.-designated Foreign Terrorist Organization that has waged a deadly decades-long insurgency against Türkiye. The PKK declared in May 2025 that it was laying down its arms, opening a potential avenue for peace with the Turkish government. Türkiye has said it will end its fighting with the SDF if it removes PKK fighters from its ranks and disarms.¹⁵⁴

With Iran and its proxies weakened in Syria, Türkiye and Israel now have the region’s most powerful militaries and are at odds over interests in Syria. Israel seeks a decentralized and weakened Syria to mitigate future security threats, while Türkiye views Syria’s unification as an imperative for Türkiye’s security.¹⁵⁵

Russia Regains Some Influence in Syria

Russia, which had been a strong ally of the Assad regime, also made inroads in re-establishing ties with Syria. On October 15, following a series of mid-level diplomatic engagements between Russian and Syrian officials, President al-Shara’a met with Russian President Vladimir Putin. CJTF-OIR said that the meeting marked Syria’s readiness to restore ties with Russia as part of its strategy to improve Syria’s stability and development.¹⁵⁶

Since October, a growing number of Russian cargo planes carrying heavy military equipment and supplies arrived in Latakia, where the Russian military’s Hmeimin base is located. Media also reported Russian ground patrols from Hmeimin toward Tartus, the only Russian naval foothold in the Mediterranean.¹⁵⁷ Russia has also delivered several large shipments of oil to Syria throughout 2025, State reported.¹⁵⁸

Türkiye signed a memorandum of understanding with the al-Shara’a government and formally began training and advising the Syrian Army.

Syria supports the Russian military presence in southern Syria due to its concerns about Israeli military incursions along the Syria-Israel border.

On November 17, representatives from the Syrian Ministry of Defense accompanied senior Russian military officers to inspect positions in southern Syria from which Russian troops had previously withdrawn following the fall of Assad's regime. CJTF-OIR reported that Russian leaders are considering redeploying forces to nine rural sites in Quneitra and Dara'a in southern Syria in the early part of 2026.¹⁵⁹

The DIA assessed that Syria probably does not intend for its deepening ties with Russia to come at the expense of relations with the United States. Rather, Syria supports the Russian military presence in southern Syria due to its concerns about Israeli military incursions along the Syria-Israel border.¹⁶⁰

Russia's influence in Syria continued through deliveries of food, fuel, and currency. Russia seeks to maintain a military, political, and economic presence in Syria in addition to addressing terrorist threats from ISIS and thwarting Western regional objectives, State reported.¹⁶¹

SUPPORT TO SYRIAN PARTNER FORCES

During the reporting period, CJTF-OIR continued to partner with the SDF in northeastern Syria to advise, assist, and enable counter-ISIS operations and to sustain a robust network of counter-ISIS partners and with the Syrian Free Army (SFA) further south near the At Tanf Garrison.¹⁶²

Joint counter-ISIS operations with Syrian partner forces involved both targeted raids and clearance operations and collection of materials and intelligence for future operations to dismantle ISIS cells in Syria.¹⁶³ CJTF-OIR and Combined Special Operations Joint Task Force-Central (CSOJTF-C) said that they intended to sustain support to counter-ISIS operations through the provision of CTEF assistance to partner forces in Syria to the maximum extent possible through any force posture changes that may occur in the region.¹⁶⁴

Syrian Democratic Forces: CJTF-OIR retained a strong relationship with the SDF and a high tempo of joint counter-ISIS operations, despite the distance created by the consolidation of forces.¹⁶⁵ CJTF-OIR reported that coordination between the SDF and nearby Syrian government forces was "challenging," particularly in deconflicting operations across the Euphrates.¹⁶⁶

CJTF-OIR and the SDF conducted one to two joint operations a week from NLZ to the Dayr az Zawr, Hasakah, and Raqqa governorates.¹⁶⁷ Crucial changes in Coalition advisement improved coordination and deconfliction between the SDF and Coalition forces, which enabled successful raids of ISIS locations as well as engagements with local civil councils southwest of the Euphrates River and with detention facility personnel throughout northeastern Syria.¹⁶⁸

CSOJTF-C continued to provide material support and specialized training to the SDF and affiliated partner forces that included clearing operations, medical skills, marksmanship, tactical ground maneuvers, and developing civil governance products. It also developed classes on information operations, digital force protection, and propaganda analysis and planned joint medical training to improve emergency response coordination.¹⁶⁹

A U.S. Army Soldier provides security along the perimeter of al-Hol camp during a visit by a multinational diplomatic delegation in northeastern Syria. (French Air Force photo)



CJTF-OIR said the SDF and Asayish internal security forces have demonstrated some level of independence in simple point target raids, but they rely heavily on special operations forces for targeting and planning for more complex or larger objectives.¹⁷⁰ CJTF-OIR said that this was especially evident in direct-action raids conducted with the assistance of Jordanian special operations forces.¹⁷¹ Certain SDF elements have demonstrated progress toward operating independently, CJTF-OIR said.¹⁷²

Detention facilities: The United States continued to urge countries to repatriate and rehabilitate or prosecute ISIS-affiliated individuals in Syria. However, as of the end of December, there had been little change to the number of ISIS detainees in SDF custody in detention centers in northeastern Syria at the end of December 2025: approximately 9,000 ISIS detainees remained, including approximately 2,000 foreign fighters.¹⁷³

During the reporting period, while the SDF guard force maintained the ability to securely guard the detainees, instability in the region has continued to pull SDF attention from formal training by Coalition forces.¹⁷⁴ After a long lull, the SDF requested Coalition support for training detention facility security forces. CJTF-OIR said the SDF and its women's force approved training on detention facility management and biometric enrollment of detainees, particularly focusing on ISIS fighters.¹⁷⁵

There were no attacks on SDF detention facilities during the reporting period.¹⁷⁶ CJTF-OIR reported that Coalition forces conduct annual rehearsals on contingency responses to coordinated attacks on major partner-managed detention facilities.¹⁷⁷ Coalition forces also began a comprehensive assessment of detention facilities.¹⁷⁸ CJTF-OIR assessed the electrical system at the Panorama Detention Center in an effort to prevent exploitation by detainees.¹⁷⁹

State said that the United States supported ongoing efforts to transfer SDF detention centers to the Syrian government.¹⁸⁰ In June, media reported that the SDF and the Syrian government agreed to exchange prisoners.¹⁸¹ No prisoner exchanges were reported during the reporting period, according to State.¹⁸²

Syrian Free Army: CJTF-OIR continued to partner with the SFA to advise, assist, and enable counter-ISIS operations, as the SFA continued its integration into the Syrian government.¹⁸³ CJTF-OIR said that the SFA integration has not created any conflicts.¹⁸⁴ SFA forces operate within the 55-kilometer deconfliction zone around the At Tanf Garrison. They also conduct deliberate patrols outside the deconfliction zone to intercept weapons smuggling across the Badiyah.¹⁸⁵

CJTF-OIR reported that the Syrian Ministry of Interior took over border security and was focused on securing the tri-border region of Syria, Iraq, and Jordan near the At Tanf Garrison.¹⁸⁶ CJTF-OIR said that the ministry's efforts will better enable the SFA to focus on counter-ISIS operations.¹⁸⁷

CJTF-OIR training of the SFA focused on marksmanship, establishment of listening and operating posts, and the fundamentals of reconnaissance. CJTF-OIR forces have developed a detailed training plan for the next 3 months focused on marksmanship, mounted and dismounted maneuver, and air assault operations.¹⁸⁸ The SFA also encountered some resistance from local populations during the quarter, including threats of violence, protests, and roadblocks after the SFA arrested a local businessman in July.¹⁸⁹

Syrian government forces: As of the end of December, CJTF-OIR did not fully partner with the Syrian government.¹⁹⁰ Negotiations with the Syrian government continued regarding a permanent U.S. presence in Damascus, coordination on counter-ISIS operations and on SDF integration.¹⁹¹ CJTF-OIR said the Syrian government welcomed discussions on the role of a continued U.S. military presence for counterterrorism and to advise and assist the General Intelligence Service (GIS), and the ministries of defense and foreign affairs.¹⁹²

U.S. Special Operations Forces conducted multiple visits to Damascus and held meetings with the GIS Counterterrorism director.¹⁹³ CJTF-OIR also worked with the Ministry of Defense to deconflict civilian aircraft for operations and ground movements.¹⁹⁴

The DIA reported that the Syrian government continued to demonstrate willingness to work with the United States to fight terrorism.¹⁹⁵ The Syrian government conducted multiple counter-ISIS operations, both independently and with U.S. forces, including a multi-day joint operation to locate and destroy ISIS weapons caches in southern Syria.¹⁹⁶ In August, the GIS, in coordination with security forces from the Ministry of Interior, successfully disrupted ISIS cells in Idlib.¹⁹⁷ In November, Syrian forces worked with U.S. forces to identify and eliminate more than 15 ISIS weapons caches.¹⁹⁸ However, the overall effectiveness of government counter-ISIS efforts is limited by a lack of trained, qualified personnel, and the nascent state of security institutions, the DIA said.¹⁹⁹

REPATRIATION AND REINTEGRATION

According to State, the only durable solution to the humanitarian and security crisis in the displaced persons camps in northeastern Syria is for countries of origin to repatriate, remove, rehabilitate, reintegrated, and where appropriate, ensure accountability for their nationals.²⁰⁰ In September, the USCENTCOM Commander, Admiral Cooper, emphasized the urgency of repatriation from al-Hol, the largest camp, noting that it reduces opportunities for extremist influence and hinders ISIS's ability to regenerate.²⁰¹ Since assuming command of USCENTCOM in August, Admiral Cooper visited al-Hol multiple times.²⁰²

From July to December, the population of the al-Hol and Roj camps continued to decrease.²⁰³ (See Figures 3 and 4.) Residents included third-country nationals from more than 50 countries outside Syria.²⁰⁴

U.S. Support for Al-Hol Management Ends, Transitions to UNHCR

On October 1, the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) assumed initial camp management of al-Hol and Roj after a U.S. award for al-Hol camp management ended in September. UNHCR said the transition did not interrupt services or coordination.²⁰⁵ The United States contributed \$13 million in funding to support camp management and coordination, which includes psychosocial support, health, nutrition, education, food assistance, shelter, and non-food assistance. The European Union, Canada, France, Germany, Italy, New Zealand, and Sweden also planned to contribute funding to the transition.²⁰⁶

State reported that the Syrian government and Kurdish leaders in northeastern Syria supported the transfer.²⁰⁷ Discussions with the Syrian government continued regarding plans to hand over the camps and detention centers to the Syrian government and eventually dismantle them, State said.²⁰⁸

State said that U.S. funding reductions as a result of the Foreign Assistance Review did not impact operations in al-Hol and Roj camps, which include monthly food baskets, bread delivery, protection services, and access to primary health care.²⁰⁹ However, some donor countries terminated or reduced funding for international organizations providing activities inside al-Hol.²¹⁰

Figure 3.

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

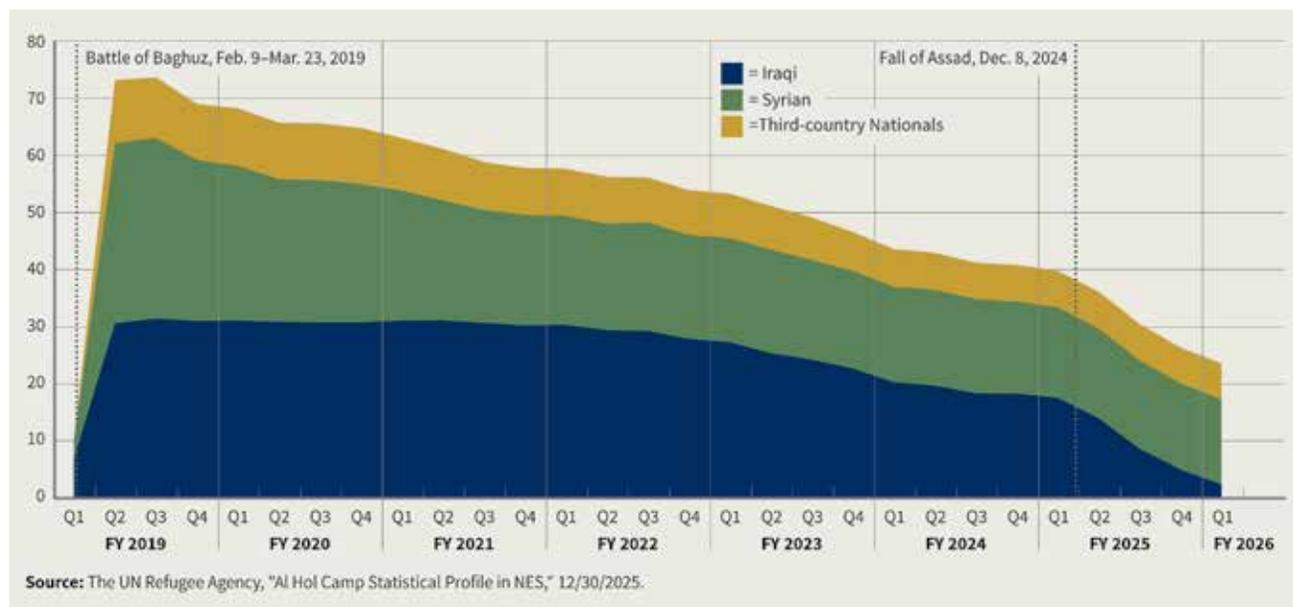
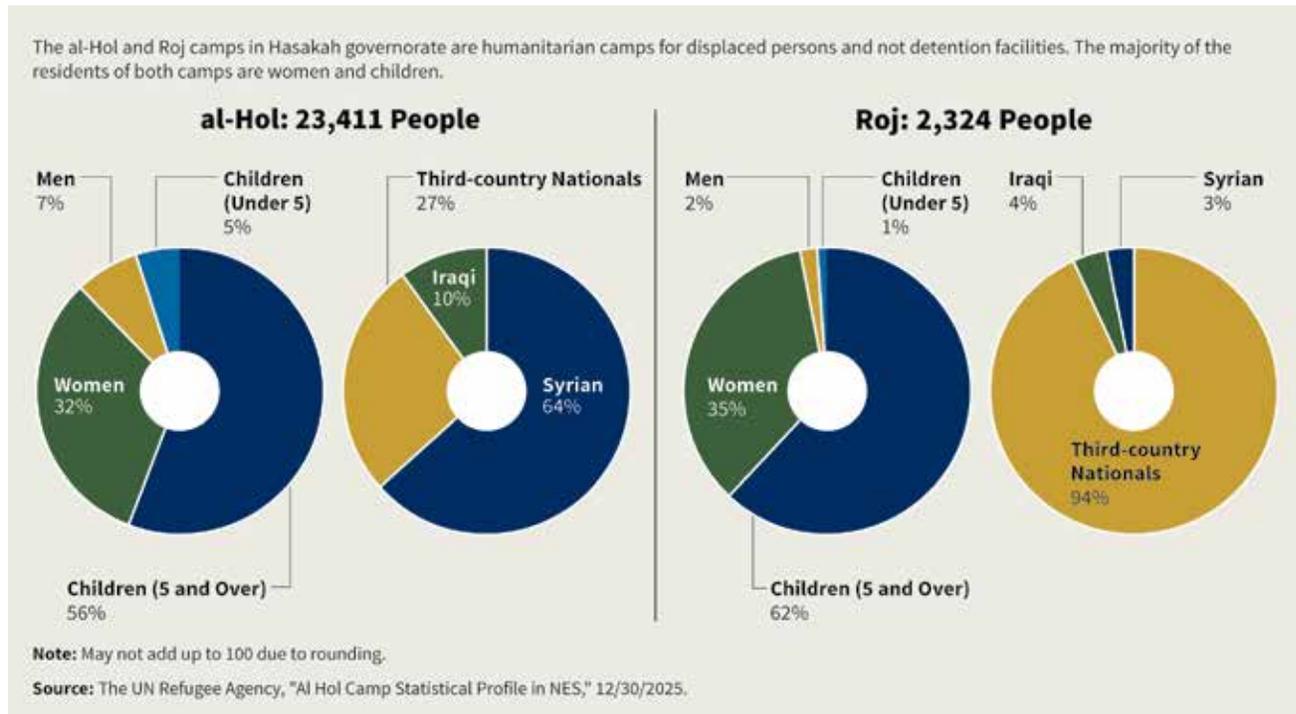


Figure 4.
Population of al-Hol and Roj Camps as of December



The UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Assistance (OCHA) reported that the areas where al-Hol and al-Roj camps are located were disproportionately impacted by the reduction in U.S. assistance in 2025, particularly in informal settlements and IDP camps.²¹¹

Insecurity Persists at al-Hol

CJTF-OIR reported that as of the end of December, ISIS ideology and hostile behavior toward NGOs and camp security persisted in al-Hol. However, security forces at the camp were adequate to maintain basic security operations unsupported.²¹²

In September, in response to an increase in ISIS violence in al-Hol, Asayish internal security forces and the SDF Women's Protection Units conducted a large-scale clearance operation inside the camp with SDF and international Coalition support.²¹³ Reports citing an Asayish statement said that the operation resulted in the arrest of 11 ISIS members.²¹⁴

In the 3 months prior to the operation, ISIS conducted more than 30 attacks inside al-Hol, targeting humanitarian workers and destroying facilities and service installations, CJTF-OIR reported.²¹⁵ The Asayish also reported that they thwarted a large-scale escape attempt from al-Hol in September by 56 ISIS-affiliated residents.²¹⁶ In October, media reported that a 14-year-old girl in the camp was raped and killed in the camp's Foreigners' annex.²¹⁷



The Asayish said in September that female residents affiliated with ISIS indoctrinate children, impose extremist practices, and incite minors to embrace violence, endangering the lives of thousands and hampering relief and stabilization efforts.²¹⁸ The Asayish have expressed concern that instability in Syria is fueling the reorganization of ISIS sleeper cells, CJTF-OIR reported.²¹⁹

U.S. Continues to Urge Countries to Repatriate their Nationals

The United States continued to elevate third-country national repatriation with senior government officials in countries of origin and engage with the Syrian government to facilitate future repatriations and returns, State said.²²⁰ During the reporting period, State's Syria Regional Platform engaged with key SDF and Kurdish leadership, as well as NGOs that work in al-Hol.²²¹

In September, on the margins of the UN General Assembly in New York, U.S. Government representatives participated in a repatriation conference focused on the al-Hol and Roj displaced persons camps.²²² The U.S. Government emphasized the need to shift the burden of supporting the camps as U.S. and other donor funds decrease.²²³ USCENTCOM announced that it was establishing a special Joint Repatriation Cell in northeastern Syria to more directly coordinate repatriations of displaced or detained individuals.²²⁴

In November, the United States, the European Union, Germany, and United Arab Emirates convened the Coalition to Defeat ISIS Core Focus Group in Abu Dhabi. The group addressed ISIS-associated threats posed by al-Hol and Roj camps and ISIS detention facilities, supporting Syrian and Iraqi counterterrorism partners to counter ISIS threats, and countering ISIS propaganda, financial flows, State reported.²²⁵

Mine-resistant, ambush-protected vehicles carrying a multinational diplomatic delegation and Coalition troops enter al-Hol camp in northeastern Syria on October 14, 2025. (French Air Force photo)

Pace of Repatriations and Reintegrations Remain Steady

State reported that the pace and coordination efforts for repatriating or returning individuals to their countries or communities of origin from northeast Syria remained steady.²²⁶ The U.S. Government shutdown in October and November and related funding issues led to a slight decrease in third-country national repatriations, but the regular pace has resumed, State reported.²²⁷

U.S. Citizens in Syria: The United States repatriated one U.S. citizen—an unaccompanied female minor—in July with assistance from the SDF.²²⁸ U.S. citizens in northeastern Syria must volunteer for repatriation, making identifying them challenging, State said. As of December, State was aware of approximately 26 suspected U.S. citizens in displaced persons camps and detention in northeastern Syria.²²⁹

Iraqi nationals: As of the end of December, Iraq continued to repatriate its nationals at a rapid pace.²³⁰ Iraq agreed to complete voluntary repatriations of displaced Iraqis in al-Hol by the end of January 2026.²³¹ CJTF-OIR provided logistical support for repatriations.²³²

State also coordinates the repatriation of Foreign Terrorist Fighters (FTF) in SDF detention facilities by encouraging countries of origin to accept their FTF nationals, working with the SDF who locate and identify the FTFs, and coordinating with the DoD on logistical support.²³³ (See Table 5.)

Syrian nationals: State reported that Syrian humanitarian and medical cases from al-Hol—approximately 359 individuals (91 families)—returned to former Assad regime-held areas during the reporting period.²³⁴ The returns involved coordination between local stabilization NGO partners and camp administration, Kurdish authorities, and Syrian government

authorities. Stabilization and humanitarian grantees provided food and supply kits upon arrival for immediate post-return needs.²³⁵ In October, the United States ended a stabilization project supporting Syrian returns, transitioning these responsibilities to the Syrian government and UN actors.²³⁶

On December 9, the Syrian Foreign Affairs Ministry authorized UNHCR to move forward with preparations for its first reintegration—103 Syrian families—from al-Hol. A planned first tranche of roughly 33 families by the end of December 2025 did not occur.²³⁷

In an April 2025 survey, the International Organization for Migration assessed that economic hardship remains the most critical challenge to returns and sustainable

Table 5.

Repatriations from Syria to Iraq, October 2024 to December 2025

	Displaced Persons	Detainees
2024		
October–December	706 individuals (181 households)	50 individuals
2025		
January–March	4,268 individuals	206 individuals
April–June	2,622 individuals (696 households)	150 individuals
July–September	1,703 individuals (474 households)	36 individuals
October–December	2,513 individuals	0 individuals

Source: State, response to State OIG request for information, 12/19/2025.

integration of refugees and IDPs, with large majorities of those surveyed citing the difficult economic situation and unemployment as the two largest factors hindering their return.²³⁸

Third-country nationals: Third-country national repatriation continued at a slow pace.²³⁹ Some host countries have been reluctant to repatriate their nationals due to perceived security concerns, funding issues, domestic political considerations, and minimal capability to effectively rehabilitate and reintegrate returnees. Identifying and verifying citizenship of nationals in the camps is also challenging.²⁴⁰

During the reporting period, Tanzania repatriated 1 woman and 3 children (with U.S. Government assistance), France repatriated 3 women and 10 children, and Spain repatriated 1 woman and 1 child.²⁴¹ Not all repatriations are made public, nor do they proceed at a consistent pace. For example, the French repatriation was the first such operation in 2 years. Since 2019, France has repatriated approximately 60 women and 179 children from Syria, media reported.²⁴²

Kazakhstan, the Kyrgyz Republic, Tajikistan, and Uzbekistan have repatriated 1,620 children to date. State said that it planned to end counterterrorism funding related to rehabilitation and reintegration services to Tajikistan and the Kyrgyz Republic in December; similar EU funding for rehabilitation and reintegration ended in 2025.²⁴³

Australia continued to insist it would not repatriate individuals from Syrian displaced persons camps, despite conducting DNA testing and issuing passports to individuals who returned to Australia in September and October 2025, State reported.²⁴⁴ There are approximately 40 Australians—12 women and 22 to 25 children—living in the camp, media reported.²⁴⁵

DEVELOPMENT AND HUMANITARIAN ASSISTANCE

Humanitarian needs intensified for displaced persons, returnees, and those affected by continued security conflicts in Syria during the reporting period.²⁴⁶ Civilian vulnerability was compounded by winter weather conditions that restricted electricity, gas, and food services, State said.²⁴⁷ The United Nations estimated that approximately 16.5 million people in Syria required humanitarian assistance in 2025.²⁴⁸

Displaced persons and refugees: Since December 2024, according to UNCHR, more than 1.2 million Syrians returned from neighboring countries, and more than 1.9 million internally displaced Syrians returned to their areas of origin. Returnees face ongoing insecurity, damaged infrastructure, lack of economic opportunities, and limited services, State reported.²⁴⁹

Drought: In September, Syria experienced its worst drought in 36 years, which decreased wheat harvests by 40 percent, and created conditions for a wider food crisis. Rainfall decreased by 70 percent, impacting 75 percent of farmland, media reported.²⁵⁰

Since December 2024, according to UNCHR, more than 1.2 million Syrians returned from neighboring countries, and more than 1.9 million internally displaced Syrians returned to their areas of origin.



Damaged and destroyed buildings in Homs, Syria. (UNHCR photo)

Wildfires: In early July, wildfires in Syria’s coastal region and spread rapidly due to high temperatures and strong winds. Seventy-two communities were affected, displacing more than 1,150 people and affecting 14,000 individuals.²⁵¹

Unexploded ordnance: The UN Children’s Fund reported that since December 2024, there have been 870 explosive ordnance-related incidents in Syria resulting in 167 children’s deaths and 383 injuries.²⁵² According to media reporting in June, there were more than 100,000 unexploded ordnance and landmines in Syria.²⁵³

UN Reorganizes Humanitarian Structure in Syria

Over the past year, the United Nations reorganized and realigned its humanitarian architecture across Syria, State reported. This resulted in some parts of Syria receiving UN support for the first time in years under the increased role of the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA).²⁵⁴ State reported that according to OCHA, sanctions relief removed “reconstruction hurdles” that will reduce humanitarian assistance needs.²⁵⁵ Region-specific humanitarian coordination structures that previously existed are now consolidated into a whole-of-Syria coordination apparatus in Damascus.²⁵⁶ Coordination is still centrally managed in Damascus with area-based coordination structures at key hubs in southern, northwestern and northeastern Syria, State reported.²⁵⁷

According to State, the U.S. Government continued to support the Syria Recovery Trust Fund, which works to promote the stabilization and recovery of northern Syria through its interventions in agriculture, food security, health, water, electricity, access to finance/ livelihoods and waste management.²⁵⁸

U.S. Assistance Continues to Wind Down

Active humanitarian assistance: State’s Bureau of Population, Refugees, and Migration (PRM) continued to fund eight humanitarian assistance awards in northeastern Syria, three of which were scheduled to end in December 2025.²⁵⁹ (See Table 6.) State-funded third-party monitors continued to conduct site visits during the reporting period.²⁶⁰

On July 1, State assumed management of 15 remaining humanitarian assistance programs from USAID.²⁶¹ (See Table 7.) Five former USAID-funded partners continued to provide lifesaving activities in al-Hol, ranging from providing daily bread to basic health services and support to trauma-affected children, during the reporting period.²⁶² However, 14 of the 15 USAID awards transferred, valued at \$102.6 million, were scheduled to end on December 31, State reported.²⁶³ These programs operated in northeastern and northwestern Syria, with some reaching into previously regime-held areas.²⁶⁴

Active stabilization assistance: State reported that five State stabilization projects—supporting civilian security, essential services, education, and accountability—continued, as did one project supporting demining in northeastern Syria.²⁶⁵ (See Table 8.)

Demining assistance: State supported the removal and destruction of explosive remnants of war and improvised explosive devices in northeastern Syria. (See Table 9.) These demining operations focused on survey and clearance of explosive hazards, making critical infrastructure sites safe for use, and paved the way for other stabilization priorities. The activities are also complemented by risk education programs that alert communities to the dangers of explosive hazards, State reported.²⁶⁶

Terminated programs: As a result of the Foreign Assistance Review, 16 USAID humanitarian assistance awards, 1 State humanitarian assistance award, and all USAID stabilization awards for programming in Syria were terminated by July 1.²⁶⁷ State said that it did not terminate any humanitarian awards during the July to December period.²⁶⁸ Between July and December, the U.S. Government paid \$9,173 to implementers in Syria under the Prompt Payment Act, which authorizes interest penalties when the U.S. Government does not pay bills on a timely basis.

Risks: Prior to the July 2025 transfer of many USAID programs to State and the termination of others, USAID staff then employed by the agency identified a number of challenges and risks affecting programs in Iraq and Syria.²⁶⁹ The risks included potential gaps in the management of USAID awards during contract transfers.²⁷⁰ There was also a risk of fraud, waste, or mismanagement during the rapid closeout and disposition of equipment and commodities.²⁷¹ The termination of third-party monitoring contracts in both Syria and Iraq has further limited oversight of humanitarian programs, USAID said.²⁷²

State said that it hired two U.S. direct hire staff and five locally employed staff from USAID to work on Syria programming.²⁷³ State said that it was not responsible for disposition of USAID-financed goods or equipment purchased for terminated USAID awards or closeout activities.²⁷⁴

On July 1, State assumed management of 15 remaining humanitarian assistance programs from USAID.

Table 6.

Active State PRM Humanitarian Awards in Syria, as of December 31, 2025

Funds Obligated to Date Period of Performance	Description
\$13 million September 2025–September 2026	Supports camp management, coordination, and essential services (food and water) in displaced persons camps in northeast Syria. Supports Syrian voluntary returns and reintegration from northeastern Syria.
\$12.9 million January 2025–December 2025	Supports emergency response, essential services (health, water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH), and nutrition), monitoring of detainees, and protection to victims of armed conflict.
\$51.4 million January 2025–December 2025	Provides lifesaving assistance to refugees and displaced families in Syria through provision of core relief items, emergency shelter, and protection activities. Facilitates voluntary refugee returns to Syria through shelter rehabilitation, transportation and cash assistance, and access to civil documentation.
Flexible regional contribution of which \$5 million is for Syria October 2024–December 2025	Provides lifesaving health and nutrition support to children and women in Palestinian refugee camps in Syria.
Flexible regional contribution of which \$4 million is for Syria September 2025–September 2026	Provides lifesaving health and nutrition support to children and women in Palestinian refugee camps in Syria and host communities.
\$7.1 million September 2025–September 2026	Provides essential services (WASH, nutrition, health, and child protection), reintegration support in priority Syrian governorates, advocacy for member states to repatriate their nationals (children and caregivers), and family tracing and reunification of children.
\$2.9 million September 2023–September 2026	Provides child protection, education, and emergency mental health services in al-Hol camp to children, youth, and families.
\$23.4 million October 2025–March 2026	Provides lifesaving support in southern Syria with WASH, food, shelter, and health.

Source: State, vetting comment, 2/4/2026.

Table 7.

USAID Humanitarian Awards in Syria Transferred to State on July 1, 2025

Funds Obligated to Date Period of Performance	Description
\$6.9 million October 2024–December 2025	To increase the resilience of conflict and disaster affected people in northwest Syria through health services.

(continued on next page)

Funds Obligated to Date Period of Performance	Description
\$153.6 million December 2023–December 2025	Food assistance, humanitarian coordination, information management and assessments, and nutrition in Syria.
\$64 million July 2024–December 2025	Food assistance, multi-purpose cash assistance, nutrition, WASH; and economic recovery and market systems in northwestern Syria.
\$27.2 million September 2024–December 2025	WASH; health, nutrition, protection, and humanitarian coordination, information management, and assessments across Syria.
\$30.2 million April 2024–December 2025	Lifesaving and specialized health, nutrition, and protection services for the most at-risk, conflict-affected populations in Syria.
\$28.5 million September 2023–December 2025	Emergency multisector programming to support household needs, vulnerabilities, protection risks, coping strategies and capacities that will increase resilience to respond to shocks and save lives in Syria.
\$12.4 million October 2023–December 2025	Health, protection, and humanitarian coordination in northeastern Syria.
\$6.2 million June 2024–December 2025	WASH, food assistance, protection, health, and multi-purpose cash assistance in Syria.
\$1.8 million October 2024–September 2025	WASH and humanitarian coordination, information management, and assessment for 50,000 beneficiaries in northeastern Syria.
\$28 million April 2024–December 2025	Health, multipurpose cash, nutrition, protection, shelter, and water, sanitation, and hygiene assistance in northern Syria.
\$313,884 September 2023–September 2025	Transport, delivery, and distribution of 69.12 metric tons (MT) of Nutributter and 17.28 MT of Enov'M food supplements.
\$41.9 million July 2024–December 2025	Food, multipurpose cash assistance, protection, health, shelter and settlements, and humanitarian coordination, information management, and assessment in northeastern and northwestern Syria.
\$88.1 million July 2023–September 2026	Humanitarian coordination, information management, and assessment; protection; WASH; shelter; food assistance; and agriculture in northern Syria.
\$56.8 million August 2023–December 2025	Humanitarian coordination, information management, and assessment; protection; WASH; shelter; food assistance, and agriculture in northern Syria.
\$8.3 million March 2024–December 2025	Food assistance; economic recovery and market systems; nutrition; protection; WASH; and humanitarian coordination, information management, and assessment.

Source: State Insight, 8/6/2025; State, response to State OIG request for information, 12/19/2025

Table 8.

Active State Stabilization Awards in Syria, as of December 31, 2025

Program Title Funds Obligated to Date Period of Performance	Goals and Activity Highlights
Community Policing Program in Syria \$22 million, inclusive of foreign donor funding. October 2023–September 2026	Goal: Security services in Syria are provided in a more effective manner that inclusively serves, and is supported by, communities. Activities: Support and training of Internal Security Forces, task forces, and community engagement. Activities take place in and around al-Hol as well as other areas throughout northeastern Syria.
Supporting Local Governance and Essential Services in Syria \$26.9 million, inclusive of foreign donor funding. May 2023–March 2026	Goal: To build the capacity of local Syrian governance actors to better serve Syrian citizens by improving the quality of and access to essential services. Activities: Support essential services in northeastern Syria, including firefighting response efforts, water station solarization, and vehicle maintenance. Support al-Hol returns by providing technical, logistical, and operational support to the Social Affairs and Labor Committees, strengthening their capacity to guide reintegration efforts for returnee and host communities.
Supporting Education in Syria \$25 million, inclusive of foreign donor funding. November 2021–January 2026	Goal: Fund local education providers and support and training to students, caregivers, out-of-work youth, and community members in both formal and non-formal settings, using tailored psychosocial support and social-emotional learning curricula to address groups most at risk for ISIS recruitment. Activities: Vocational training, teacher training, social reintegration, strengthening access to formal education services, and remedial education in areas reintegrating al-Hol returnees and other areas in northeast Syria, including informal IDP camps.
Supporting the Syrian Political Process \$2.8 million. Concludes October 2025	Goal: To advance the UN-facilitated, Syrian-led negotiation process called for by UNSCR 2254 seeking a political settlement and ceasefire in Syria. Activities: Support al-Hol returns by providing technical, logistical, and operational support.

Source: State, response to State OIG request for information, 12/19/2025.

Table 9.

Active PM/WRA Awards in Syria, as of December 31, 2025

Program Title Funds Obligated to Date Period of Performance	Goals and Activity Highlights
Mine Action in Northeast Syria \$22,545,000 April 1, 2023–May 31, 2027	Activities: Survey and clear areas of explosive hazards, making critical infrastructure sites safe for use and paving the way for other stabilization priorities, while also delivering explosive ordnance risk education to affected communities.

Source: State, response to State OIG request for information 12/19/2025; State vetting comment 2/4/2026.





Peshmerga soldiers stand together during a speech in Gwer, Iraq. (U.S. Army photo)

IRAQ

- 40 Support to Iraqi Partner Forces
- 44 Support to Kurdish Security Forces
- 45 Iranian Influence
- 46 Governance
- 49 Economy
- 50 Repatriation and Reintegration
- 51 Development and Humanitarian Assistance



U.S. Soldiers conduct individual weapons training in Baghdad, Iraq. (U.S. Army National Guard photo)

IRAQ

U.S. policy objectives for Iraq remained unchanged from previous quarters.²⁷⁵ Despite ongoing repose activities, many key U.S. advisory relationships in federal Iraq are expected to endure in a reduced capacity over the long-term as part of a traditional bilateral security relationship. The Office of the Under Secretary of Defense for Policy (OUSD(P)) stated that the United States is committed to supporting a sovereign, secure, and stable Iraq. The United States discussions with Iraq continued on how the United States will advise, assist, and enable Iraqi security forces (ISF) in a future bilateral security cooperation partnership after the transition.²⁷⁶

SUPPORT TO IRAQI PARTNER FORCES

CJTF-OIR continued the OIR mission in Iraq through its final stages of advising, enabling, and assisting components of the Iraqi Security Forces, the Iraqi Counter Terrorism Service (CTS), and Kurdish Security Forces (Peshmerga).²⁷⁷ CJTF-OIR continued advising its partners from Erbil as it concluded its advisory mission in federal Iraq from bases in the greater Baghdad area.²⁷⁸ (See page 41.) CJTF-OIR said that repose operations and the reduction of special operations units in Iraq will reduce the frequency of interactions with counter-ISIS partners in federal Iraq, but episodic engagements will continue in the future after the transition to a bilateral military-to-military relationship.²⁷⁹

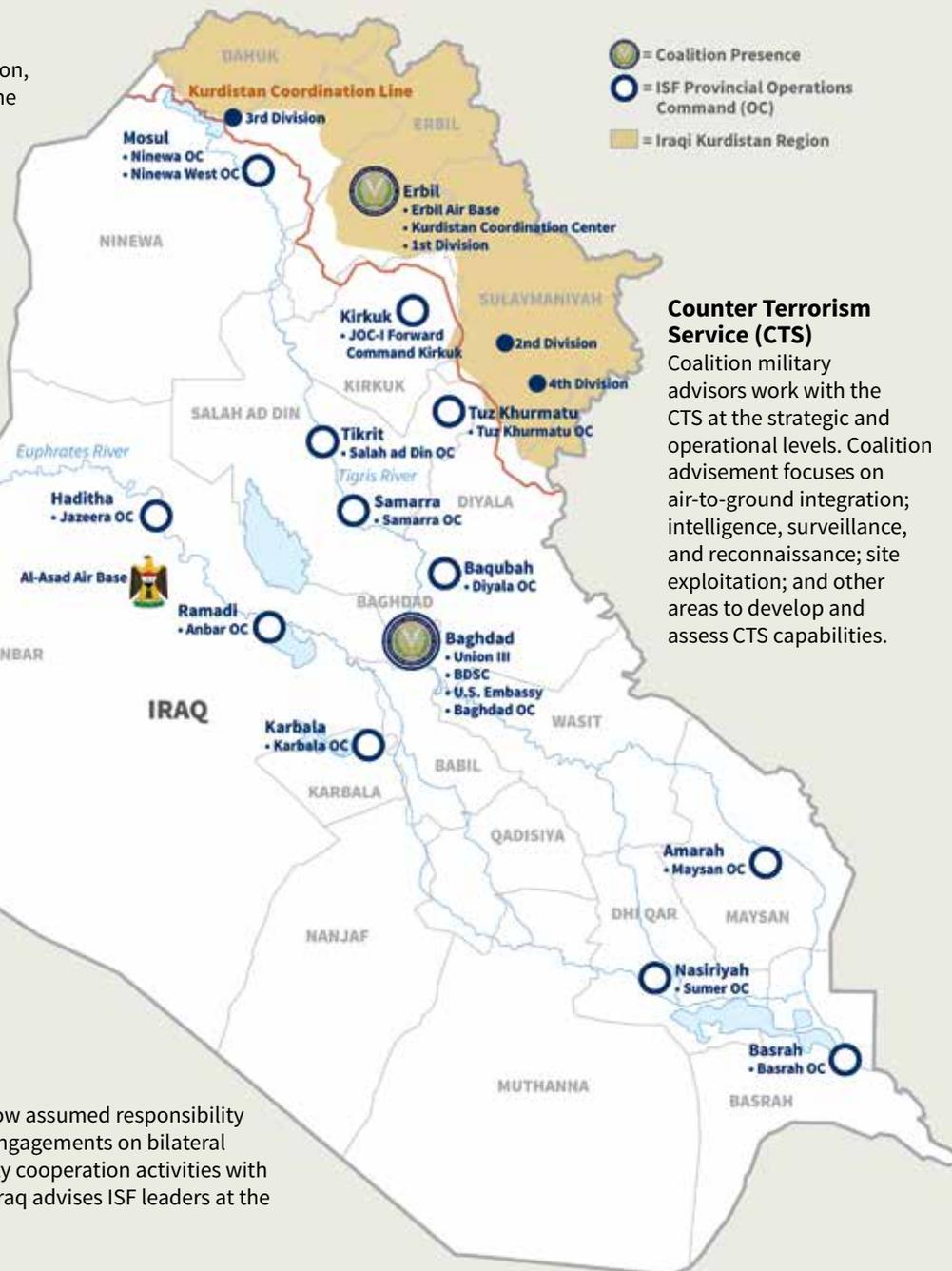
COALITION ADVISING IN IRAQ

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.

Federal Iraq

U.S. Military Group–Iraq has now assumed responsibility from CJTF-OIR for mil-to-mil engagements on bilateral security assistance and security cooperation activities with partner forces. NATO Mission-Iraq advises ISF leaders at the ministerial level.



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.

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

Sources: CJTF-OIR, response to DoD OIG request for information, 25.4 OIR 006, 9/10/2025; Military Times, "US completes withdrawal from al-Asad airbase, Iraq says," 1/19/2026.

ISF personnel review a vehicle inspection checklist at Erbil Air Base, Iraq. (U.S. Army photo)



CJTF-OIR Concludes Advisory Support to JOC-I

CJTF-OIR concluded its advisory, assistance, and enabling mission with the Joint Operations Center-Iraq (JOC-I) with an event that certified the JOC-I's independence in joint fires coordination at a national level. Some Coalition advisors remained to continue coordination and assistance, as the U.S. Military Group-Iraq (DoD personnel at the U.S. Embassy in Baghdad) assumed this role.²⁸⁰ The Coalition advisors' Strike Cell component that formerly advised the JOC-I relocated to Jordan to support the Damascus Coordination Center mission.²⁸¹ Airspace coordination within Iraq for CJTF-OIR is now coordinated through an Air Defense Liaison Team and a Marine Special Operations liaison stationed at the U.S. Embassy.²⁸²

For years, Coalition advisors have reported shortcomings in JOC-I capability, which had not been fully resolved at the conclusion of the advisory mission. Decision-making within the ISF remains highly centralized, creating unnecessary delays during time-sensitive missions. U.S.-provided secure communications systems remain underutilized and non-standard unsecure communications remain commonplace. Iraqi joint fires, particularly air strikes, are still hampered by maintenance failures, limited interoperability of sensors and guided munitions, limited numbers of trained terminal attack controllers, and poorly managed procurement policies. But CJTF-OIR said that the JOC-I demonstrated an adequate capacity to conduct independent joint fires.²⁸³

CJTF-OIR Downsizes CTS Relationship

With the reposture of U.S. forces in Iraq and the increased capabilities of ISF, U.S. advisory and enabling support to the CTS has decreased to its lowest levels since the beginning of the OIR mission. CJTF-OIR said that with the reposture, Coalition capacity to assess the effectiveness of unpartnered CTS operations will be reduced. Partnered counter-ISIS operations and advising will transition from embedded support to periodic advising.²⁸⁴ U.S. forces will also lose visibility on the planning and outcomes of many CTS operations due to

the reposture, as a U.S. Special Operations company-level headquarters is no longer co-located with the headquarters of the 1st and 2nd Iraqi Special Operations Forces brigades.²⁸⁵

CJTF-OIR reported that the CTS continued its incremental institutional growth. The CTS implemented new procedures for planning unmanned aerial system operations and adjusted how it processes intelligence through its Operational Commands, which led to improved targeting capability. The CTS also instituted new training blocks on intelligence and evidence collection. The CTS showed improvements in independent targeting cycle development and establishing coordination cells with other Iraqi counter-terrorism intelligence organizations.²⁸⁶

With the establishment of the CTS Air Wing, the CTS is making progress toward an organic air assault capability to replace their dependency on U.S. rotary wing aviation, but CJTF-OIR support already repostured without this capability fully in place. Despite recent efforts to expedite the training of pilots and procurement of helicopters, the CTS will be forced to sustain independent operations for the foreseeable future without organic aviation support.²⁸⁷ The currently low level of ISIS activity in Iraq and Iraq's ability to maintain pressure on remaining ISIS networks has reduced the risk of CJTF-OIR withdrawing from its enabling relationship with the CTS while capability gaps remain.²⁸⁸

END-USE MONITORING OF MILITARY ASSETS PROVIDED TO IRAQ

Defense articles and materiel provided to Iraq under the Arms Export Control Act are subject to end-use monitoring (EUM) to ensure compliance with the terms of the transfer agreement.²⁸⁹ Monitors from the U.S. Military Group-Iraq at the U.S. Embassy in Baghdad conduct EUM. "Routine" EUM is a requirement that occurs in conjunction with other security cooperation events during which the Ministry of Defense, Ministry of Interior, CTS, and the Ministry of Peshmerga Affairs detail thousands of defense articles in quarterly reports.²⁹⁰

"Enhanced" EUM is a requirement for annual, in-person accounting of enhanced-designated articles. In Iraq, night-vision devices and Stinger missiles comprise 95 percent of the nearly 5,900 enhanced-designated articles. When security conditions prevent monitors from traveling to conduct in-person accounting where the items are normally stored, Iraqi partners aggregate items at locations accessible for U.S. personnel. This allows the serial numbers of the enhanced-designated articles to be verified, ensuring compliance with regulations and applicable transfer agreements. Since the return from ordered departure in spring 2024, U.S. personnel verified 5,200 defense articles during 37 physical inspection visits, State said.²⁹¹

LEAHY LAW CERTIFICATION

State reported that it was not aware of any instances during the reporting period in which U.S. assistance to the ISF violated 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.²⁹²

SUPPORT TO KURDISH SECURITY FORCES

With the conclusion of the CJTF-OIR mission in federal Iraq, the Coalition advising and U.S. Security Force Assistance Brigade efforts in the Iraqi Kurdish Region (IKR) are the largest remaining advisory effort for CJTF-OIR.²⁹³ According to the U.S.-Iraq memorandum of understanding on Peshmerga Reform, reforms were to be completed by September 2025, but even with a year extension their full completion seems unlikely.²⁹⁴ OIR is executing its planned reduction of Peshmerga support as its current memorandum of understanding reaches completion, but individual countries within the Coalition may also retain bilateral security partnerships to continue developing the Ministry of Peshmerga Affairs (MoPA).²⁹⁵

Despite ongoing U.S. advisory efforts, the MoPA continued to face several challenges:

Transition forces to MoPA control: As of November, the MoPA had constituted four Peshmerga divisions at full operating capability and three more at initial operating capability, with each division containing four Regional Guards brigades.²⁹⁶ The number of Peshmerga forces under MoPA command rose to 84,923 personnel. However, tens of thousands of Kurdish forces remained under partisan control of the two major Kurdish political parties with little momentum toward integrating them under a non-partisan command structure.²⁹⁷

CJTF-OIR coalition and partner forces hold an after action review meeting to discuss the results of a validation exercise for the Peshmerga in Erbil, Iraq. (U.S. Army photo)



State said that the U.S. Government remains deeply concerned about the role of Iran-aligned militia groups operating under the Popular Mobilization Forces umbrella including U.S.-designated terrorist groups and affiliated members.

Despite positive pronouncements during the reporting period on successful integration of partisan units from the KDP-aligned 80s Force, no agreement has been reached on the formation of overarching area commands that are anticipated to have a partisan division.²⁹⁸

Command and Control: The Ministry of Peshmerga Operations Center is still unable to command and control Peshmerga units as Area Commands are still not established due to partisan impasse. The lack of Area Commands prevents the MoPA from executing strategic or operational joint fires.²⁹⁹

Operations: Two Peshmerga divisions did not achieve full operating capability status in their validation exercises. Lack of professional military education will undermine the capability to do complex operations.³⁰⁰

Sustainment: Newly formed Peshmerga divisions decline in capability after validation due to lack of resources and sustainment training. The MoPA lacks a viable plan for sustainment without CTEF and Coalition support.³⁰¹ CTEF support for the Peshmerga is programmed to drop by approximately half in FY 2026 with the end of Peshmerga stipends, despite a continuing impasse between Erbil and Baghdad on salaries.³⁰²

IRANIAN INFLUENCE

United States Targets Iran and its Proxies with Additional Sanctions

Since February 2025, with the release of the National Security Presidential Memorandum-2, the United States has pursued an aggressive response to attempts to circumvent U.S. sanctions by Iran and aligned actors throughout the world. Treasury stated that its campaign has two main pillars: (1) disrupting the purchase of oil, Iran's main source of revenue and where China is its key buyer; and (2) targeting Iran's use of shadow banking, the informal networks that allow Iran to use revenue proceeds to fund their nefarious activity.³⁰³ Many of these U.S. activities have targeted Iranian proxies and their smuggling networks in Iraq, including many actors that also threatened CJTF-OIR and other U.S. forces in the region.³⁰⁴

In July, Treasury placed new designations on Iraqi-British national Salim Ahmed Said and his oil smuggling network that has been falsely selling Iranian oil as Iraqi oil since at least 2020. According to Treasury, this illicit network, which has raised billions of dollars in revenue for the Iranian regime, operated through shell companies, a shadow fleet, and influence networks throughout the Iraqi government.³⁰⁵ In September, Treasury sanctioned a second Iraqi citizen, Waleed al-Samarra'i, and his associated business interests. Treasury stated that these illicit smuggling networks provided direct support to Iran's Islamic Revolutionary Guards Corps and their terrorist activities in the region.³⁰⁶ Additionally in September, State designated the Iran-aligned militia groups Harakat al-Nujaba, Kata'ib Sayyid al-Shuhada, Harakat Ansar Allah al-Awfiya, and Kata'ib al-Imam Ali as Foreign Terrorist Organizations.³⁰⁷

In October, Treasury designated Iran-aligned militia leaders and their business interests within Iraq, including groups responsible for numerous attacks on U.S. forces in the region. Included in the designations were leaders of Asaib Ahl al-Haq, Kata'ib Hezbollah, and the

Muhandis General Company (and its front companies) which have expanded the influence of Iran-aligned militias throughout the private sector in Iraq.³⁰⁸ Treasury stated that these illicit networks operated through bribes and the complicity of senior Iraqi government leaders, including members of parliament, but could not name who these individuals were or if they were involved in U.S.-bilateral security relations with Iraq.³⁰⁹

Treasury actions in Iraq have also targeted Russian entities supporting Russia's invasion of Ukraine.³¹⁰ U.S. designations on Lukoil and Rosneft in October forced Lukoil to abandon Iraq's West Qurna-2 oil field.³¹¹

Controversial Popular Mobilization Commission Bill Withdrawn

In August, Prime Minister Mohammed Shia al-Sudani withdrew a bill to expand the powers of the Popular Mobilization Forces before a final vote. According to State, supporters of the bill in the Iraqi parliament, particularly Shia parties, are expected to reintroduce the bill. The U.S. Government had stressed that approval of the bill would further institutionalize Iran-aligned armed militia groups associated with terrorist entities and leaders, including some that have attacked U.S. interests and killed U.S. personnel.³¹²

State said that the U.S. Government remains deeply concerned about the role of Iran-aligned militia groups operating under the Popular Mobilization Forces umbrella including U.S.-designated terrorist groups and affiliated members. State said that these groups continue to engage in unlawful, destabilizing, and violent activities that undermine Iraq's security and threaten regional stability and that passing the bill would be inconsistent with the goals of the U.S.-Iraq bilateral security assistance partnership.³¹³

GOVERNANCE

Iraq Holds National Elections

On November 11, the Iraqi government held national parliamentary elections for the sixth time since the United States toppled the Saddam Hussein regime in 2003. According to the Independent High Electoral Commission (IHEC), the organization tasked with conducting the elections, nearly 12 million Iraqis voted, including 1.1 million members of Iraq's security forces and internally displaced persons (IDP) living inside camps. Despite predictions of voter apathy, turnout was approximately 56 percent, a significant increase over the 43 percent turnout in 2021 and the highest since the 2014 elections.³¹⁴ The elections were largely peaceful, according to State, citing news coverage.³¹⁵

Since the November 11 parliamentary elections, political parties and electoral coalitions have been bargaining over government formation. The Iran-aligned Shia Coordination Framework is leading the process and initially nominated Nouri al-Maliki, who served as prime minister from 2006 to 2014, to be prime minister. Caretaker Prime Minister Mohammed Shia al-Sudani is also a potential candidate as his electoral coalition finished first, winning 46 parliamentary seats out of 329.³¹⁶

Despite predictions of voter apathy, turnout was approximately 56 percent, a significant increase over the 43 percent turnout in 2021 and the highest since the 2014 elections.

The major Kurdish political parties have been unable to form a new government since the IKR elections in October 2024.

Government formation will likely take months. Iraq’s parliament opened its first session on December 30, kicking off a constitutionally mandated sequence of actions to form a new government.³¹⁷ Within 30 days, the parliament is required to elect a president with a two-thirds absolute majority of 220 members, a process that is expected to be very difficult. Once elected, the new president has 15 days to name the prime minister. The new cabinet members, nominated by the prime minister, must be approved by a majority vote.³¹⁸

In the months leading up to the elections, IHEC announced that 31 political alliances, 38 parties, and 79 independent candidates had officially registered to participate in the November elections.³¹⁹ A total of 7,440 candidates registered for the elections, the second highest number since 9,000 registered in 2014.³²⁰ Beginning in August and carrying into September, IHEC announced that hundreds of candidates were disqualified citing past Baathist affiliations and criminal convictions and charges.³²¹ Barred candidates included high-profile members of parliament, former governors, judges, and other public figures.³²² According to State, many observers perceived the disqualifications as political interference in the electoral process, potentially undermining public confidence in IHEC’s impartiality.³²³

Efforts to Form Kurdish Regional Government Languish

The major Kurdish political parties have been unable to form a new government since the IKR elections in October 2024. Kurdistan Democratic Party (KDP) and Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (PUK) politicians have proposed various approaches to address the deadlock, including dissolving the IKR parliament and holding new elections in November with national parliamentary elections.³²⁴ In August, the KDP and PUK agreed to reactivate the IKR parliament in September to elect a speaker and begin forming a new government.³²⁵ At the end of 2025, these efforts were stalled, as parties are deadlocked on the allocation of key cabinet positions, according to State.³²⁶

Rivalries between political leaders in the IKR became violent on August 22 after PUK leader Bafel Talabani alleged that Lahur Talabani, leader of the People’s Front opposition party, had hired a “hit squad” to assassinate him. Lahur and Bafel Talabani served as co-presidents of the PUK from February 2020 until July 2021, when a struggle between the cousins ousted Lahur Talabani from his leadership position.³²⁷

In the early morning hours of August 22, as authorities tried to serve an arrest warrant for Lahur Talabani at his residence, fighting broke out between Kurdish security forces and armed supporters of Lahur Talabani. According to State and media reports, the 4-hour fight included tanks, military trucks, and heavy weaponry. Four members of the security forces were killed and more than 15 wounded. During the fighting, there were reports of drones shot down over Bafel Talabani’s residence and drones targeting, but missing, the residence of the widow of the late Jalal Talabani.³²⁸ Lahur Talabani, his two brothers, and several supporters were arrested. According to media reporting, Lahur Talabani faces additional charges including premeditated murder in connection with the deaths of security personnel during the fighting on August 22.³²⁹

According to media reports, an American citizen named Brian Wilson was arrested along with Lahur Talabani’s forces and is reportedly still in detention in the IKR.³³⁰ State did not confirm the arrest.³³¹



(From left) Acting Consul General Caitlin Piper, Charge d’Affaires Joshua Harris, Deputy Secretary of State for Management and Resources Michael Rigas, Iraqi Kurdistan Region President Nechirvan Barzani, Kurdistan Regional Government Prime Minister Masrour Barzani, and Kurdistan Regional Government Deputy Prime Minister Qubad Talabani at a ribbon cutting ceremony in Erbil. (State photo)

U.S. Diplomatic Operations in Iraq

New Consulate General Compound: On December 3, Deputy Secretary of State Michael Rigas hosted a ribbon cutting ceremony for the new consulate compound in Erbil. Design of the new compound began over a decade ago, and construction was delayed by security precautions and the pandemic. A certificate of occupancy was issued on October 29, and staff moved in the following month.³³²

Staffing: Mission Iraq reported that it is under a hiring freeze for U.S. direct hire staff. In August, State granted the U.S. Consulate General in Erbil permission to hire 27 locally employed staff, including security staff.³³³

Cost-cutting: Since July 1, the U.S. Embassy in Baghdad has engaged in a multi-level approach to cost savings encompassing contract management, aviation, security support, and infrastructure upgrades to bring operations more in line with other high-threat, high-risk posts worldwide. Mission Iraq successfully re-awarded many of the contracts and increased hiring of local contractors rather than third-country nationals. Additionally, Mission Iraq transitioned from State’s organic aviation capability to commercial charter flights.³³⁴

Security: U.S. diplomatic personnel and facilities in Iraq continue to face significant collateral risk, State said, as Baghdad is transitioning to a more “permissive environment with episodes of heightened threat.”³³⁵ These threats include indirect fire, violent protests, kidnappings, and unmanned aerial systems attacks. Mission Iraq staff travel are permitted to travel throughout Iraq, though travel to some areas outside Baghdad and Erbil requires host nation approval.³³⁶ Meanwhile, the Mission Iraq Regional Security Office is implementing measures to transition the U.S. Embassy in Baghdad’s security framework to support the transition to operations akin to a traditional embassy while retaining the ability to address high-threat conditions.³³⁷

ECONOMY

United States Imposes Tariffs on Iraq's Exports

In July, the United States raised tariffs on Iraqi exports to 35 percent.³³⁸ Iraq's crude oil exports to the United States are exempt. In 2024, Iraq exported approximately \$650 million in non-oil goods, primarily agricultural products such as dates and rice.³³⁹ The Iraqi government, in response, rolled out a comprehensive strategy to mitigate effects and strengthen U.S.-Iraq relations, according to State.³⁴⁰

State said that the United States remained committed to supporting Iraq in its efforts to diversify its economy, reduce its dependence on oil export revenues, and create a more competitive and investment-friendly business environment. Additionally, the U.S. Government is promoting investment in Iraq via support through the U.S. International Development Finance Corporation and the Export-Import Bank of the United States to help Iraqi businesses access capital and resources.³⁴¹

KRG and Iraqi Government Reach Revenue Sharing Agreement

In mid-July, Iraq's Council of Ministers approved an agreement to allow the Iraqi government to resume salary payments to the Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG) in exchange for oil and non-oil revenues from the KRG. Under the agreement, the KRG agreed to send 230,000 barrels per day of oil to Iraq's national oil marketing company, and retain 50,000 barrels per day for local consumption.³⁴² It has taken more than 2 years for Iraq and the KRG to reach this agreement; the initial framework for the oil-for-funds mechanism was first detailed in Iraq's 2023 to 2025 budget.³⁴³

On September 17, the KRG announced that it had delivered its share of 233,000 bpd of crude oil to Iraq, according to media reports.³⁴⁴ The KRG reported that since the resumption of oil exports in late September, it pumped 19.5 million barrels through Iraq's oil marketing company.³⁴⁵ In return for the KRG's oil, the Iraqi government was obligated to transfer funds to the KRG for July salaries for KRG employees.³⁴⁶ According to media reports, the KRG received salaries for May through October, while salaries for November and December had not been funded.³⁴⁷

Agreement Reached to Reopen Iraq-Türkiye Pipeline

On September 22, the Iraqi government, the KRG, and private oil companies reached a significant milestone with a tripartite agreement to resume IKR oil exports, according to State.³⁴⁸ The agreement followed months of negotiations. Exports of IKR oil through the pipeline stopped in March 2023 after Türkiye lost a case brought by Iraq in a Paris-based arbitration court. Disputes on compensation, payment of arrears, revenue-sharing, oil export control, and contract specifics had delayed the agreement.³⁴⁹

In late December, the Iraq government and the KRG reached an agreement to extend export of crude oil from the IKR until March 2026, according to a press report citing the head of Iraq's oil marketing organization. The extension became necessary as Iraq's 3-year budget for 2023 to 2025 expired at the end of the year, which raised questions about the financial arrangements between the Iraqi government and the KRG.³⁵⁰

REPATRIATION AND REINTEGRATION

Al-Amal Camp at Full Capacity, Services Limited

State said that the al-Amal Rehabilitation Center in Iraq—which receives Iraqi returnees from Syria—was near its maximum capacity as new arrivals from al-Hol increased and the pace of internal reintegration from al-Amal slowed.³⁵¹ Since June 1, the al-Amal camp expanded its capacity to support a population 6,500 individuals. The average number of al-Amal residents since June 1 was 6,100, State reported.³⁵² But at the end of 2025, al-Amal was operating at its highest ever occupancy, with 6,788 residents.³⁵³ Between June 1 and December 29, 5,150 Iraqis arrived at al-Amal from al-Hol, and 3,440 individuals departed al-Amal for resettlement or areas of origin. In 2025, Iraq repatriated 11,106 individuals, more than quadruple its 2024 total of 2,683.³⁵⁴

U.S. funding continued to support camp management, food assistance, and other services at al-Amal through awards to the World Food Programme and International Organization for Migration. Other donor nations, including the United Kingdom, Canada, Germany, and Switzerland, provided funding support to residents of al-Amal.³⁵⁵ UN agencies also provided support, including through U.S.-funded activities, for water, sanitation, and hygiene; education; child protection; health and nutrition services; legal services; reintegration; shelter; camp coordination and management; non-food items; and mental health and psychosocial services.³⁵⁶

However, several U.S.-funded services were terminated earlier in the year due to the Foreign Assistance Review, prompting residents in the camp to renew concerns about deteriorating living conditions at the camp. For example, funding restrictions limited the presence of specialized female health staff, which hindered access to health services for female residents.³⁵⁷ Four cancelled USAID programs had sought to address these concerns by providing livelihood support, in particular to women returnees from al-Hol, and improving agricultural production and increasing food security, restoring essential services, and reviving local economies in returnee areas.³⁵⁸

In addition, U.S. funding for the grant that provided families returning from al-Hol camp with emergency shelter, water trucking to Sinjar, case management, and mental healthcare for psychological trauma experienced by children ended on September 30.³⁵⁹ State said that it committed to a cost extension through the end of the year for water and sanitation services at al-Amal because there was no plan for other donors or the Iraqi government to backfill water services.³⁶⁰ International organizations stated that education services for the camp's 2,000 children are over-subscribed and mental health and psychosocial services are at full capacity.³⁶¹

Support organizations and services for reintegrating Iraqi families also decreased, while the number of families leaving al-Amal increased.³⁶² Many communities hosting returnees struggled to absorb the additional demand without further straining already overstretched systems.³⁶³ The suspension of the U.S.-supported World Health Organization program has reduced medical referrals outside al-Amal.³⁶⁴

Since June 1, the al-Amal camp expanded its capacity to support a population 6,500 individuals.

According to State, Iraq's 20 remaining IDP camps, all located in the IKR, house approximately 100,000 individuals.

The United States, the United Nations, and donor countries strongly oppose the Iraqi government's efforts to open another displacement camp, called Jeddah 5. In discussions with the Iraqi Office of the National Security Advisor and the Ministry of Migration and Displacement, the United States emphasized that donor funding will not be available to Jeddah 5. In early August, the Ministry reported that it will move ahead with awarding construction contracts related to opening Jeddah 5 despite the lack of donor or international funding.³⁶⁵

United States Supports IDP Camps after Iraq Announces Their Closure

In addition to support at al-Amal, the U.S. award to the International Organization for Migration seeks to strengthen services for displaced populations living in IDP camps in northern Iraq. The program delivers a coordinated package of lifesaving interventions, including specialized protection services for survivors of conflict-related sexual violence; mental health and psychosocial support, including psychological first aid and essential mental health services; and access to emergency health care and referral pathways to prevent disease outbreaks and reduce mortality and morbidity.³⁶⁶

On August 20, an Iraqi government committee announced its intent to reclassify nearly 100,000 people currently in displacement camps as "integrated and stable" within society as a justification to close the camps. The Ministry of Migration and Displacement later clarified that no final decision had been made. Iraq's Council of Ministers must approve the move before it can go into effect.³⁶⁷

According to State, Iraq's 20 remaining IDP camps, all located in the IKR, house approximately 100,000 individuals. Most are members of the Yezidi minority community and unable to return to their places of origin due to concerns about security, social integration, and economic survival. However, the Iraqi government cannot forcibly close camps under KRG control, which effectively leaves the KRG to manage the camps on its own, resulting in major gaps in services.³⁶⁸

DEVELOPMENT AND HUMANITARIAN ASSISTANCE

Iraq hosts an estimated 343,000 refugees and asylum-seekers, the majority (88 percent) of whom are from Syria, according to the UN Refugee Agency.³⁶⁹ Displaced and returnee populations in Iraq continue to face fragile infrastructure and limited access to essential services, creating significant barriers to sustainable reintegration.³⁷⁰ Many communities hosting returnees struggle to absorb the additional demand without further straining already overstretched systems.³⁷¹

In addition, Iraq is facing its most severe drought in decades, resulting in its lowest water reserves in 80 years. The drought has also caused significant damage to Iraq's agricultural plans and ecosystems. A think tank reported that in Dhi Qar province, along the southern Euphrates River, more than 10,000 families have been displaced as the water level has

dropped. The drought has resulted in unprecedented, record-high water contamination levels, which have been raising potential health and environmental concerns, according to media reports. In Basrah province, pollution and rising salinity levels due to water scarcity have resulted in water-related illness, triggering local protests demanding solutions.³⁷²

As a result of the Foreign Assistance Review, 21 USAID programs in Iraq were cancelled.³⁷³ On July 1, five active USAID foreign assistance programs, totaling \$27 million, were transferred to State. Four of these programs ended on December 31. (See Table 10.) In addition to the five programs transferred from USAID, State had 18 active stabilization programs in Iraq and 4 humanitarian assistance awards as of December 31.³⁷⁴ (See Table 11 And Table 12.)

The U.S. Embassy in Baghdad onboarded three new assistance specialists, who coordinate assistance efforts at Mission Iraq and manage the five legacy USAID programs in Iraq. Third party monitors began field work for some awards transferred from USAID to State in December.³⁷⁵ Between July and December, the U.S. Government paid \$197,834 to implementers in Iraq under the Prompt Payment Act, which authorizes interest penalties when the U.S. Government does not pay bills on a timely basis. Most of these penalties were paid to a single implementer.

Table 10.

Active USAID Humanitarian Awards in Iraq Transferred to State on July 1, 2025

Award Number Funds Obligated to Date Period of Performance	Description
\$5 million February 2024–February 2026	The “Returning with Hope” grant provides support for al-Hol camp returnees to Iraq.
\$5.2 Million February 2024–December 2025	Provides food assistance through unconditional cash-based transfers to Syrian refugees and through e-vouchers to Iraqi IDPs in Jeddah 1 camp. Supports Iraqi government efforts to modernize the Public Distribution System (a food ration program) and strengthen social safety net.
\$3.7 Million October 2024–December 2025	Provides case management; specialized and non-specialized mental health and psychosocial support; protection monitoring; critical shelter assistance; strengthened the health system strengthening and emergency response enhancement.
\$5.75 Million October 2023–December 2025	Supports IDPs in Iraq through the provision of protection assistance and coordination.
\$5.15 million July 2023–December 2025	Supports humanitarian assistance to vulnerable and conflict-affected IDP families in camps and informal settlements.

Source: State, response to State OIG request for information, 12/19/2025.

Table 11.

Active State Stabilization Awards in Iraq, as of December 31, 2025

Funds Obligated to Date Period of Performance	Award Title
\$1.0 million July 2022–September 2025	U.S. Department of State NEA/Office of Assistance Coordination and Department of Energy
\$2.4 million September 2023–September 2025	U.S. Department of State NEA/Office of Assistance Coordination and Department of Commerce
\$1.5 million October 2022–September 2025	Strengthening Institutional Capacity
\$2.6 million October 2022–September 2027	Strengthening American-Style Higher Education
\$2.5 million October 2022–September 2027	Developing a New College of Education at AUIB
\$2.0 million October 2023–September 2027	Promoting American-Style Higher Education at the Catholic University in Erbil: Investing in Women’s Leadership and English Language Excellence
\$3.8 million October 2023–September 2025	Supporting American-Style Higher Education
\$4.0 million October 2020–September 2025	Supporting American-Style Higher Education in Iraq
\$2.1 million October 2024–September 2026	Advancing American-Style Education in Iraq Through the Center for the Advancement of Higher Education in Iraq and the Innovation Lab for Artificial Intelligence and Digital Engineering
\$0.8 million October 2024–September 2025	Collaborative Capacity Building to Educate Iraqi Youth for Careers in the Private Sector
\$1.9 million October 2024–September 2026	Strategic Pathways to Excellence in CUE's Accreditation and Social Inclusion Efforts
\$2.1 million October 2024–September 2026	Supporting American-Style Higher Education in Iraq
\$1.5 million October 2021–September 2026	Beyond Material Support: Promoting Accountability in Iraq
\$0.8 million October 2024–September 2026	Yezidi Strategic Litigation Initiative

(continued on next page)

Funds Obligated to Date Period of Performance	Award Title
October 2023–December 2025	Transitional Justice and Rehabilitation Project
September 2024–March 2026	Mitigating Armed Actor Corruption
\$0.25 million November 2024–October 2025	Strengthening the Open Budget Process in Iraq
\$3.6 million	She's Great program

Source: State, response to State OIG request for information, 12/19/2025.

Table 12.
Active State Humanitarian Awards in Iraq, as of December 31, 2025

Funds Obligated to Date Period of Performance	Award Title
\$8.2 million January 2025 – December 2025	Supports emergency response, essential services (health, WASH, and nutrition), monitoring of detainees, and protection to victims of armed conflict.
\$14.4 million January 2025 – December 2025	Supports camp management at refugee and IDP sites across Iraq, civil documentation and community reintegration for returnees, and facilitates voluntary Syrian refugee returns.
\$49.4 million September 2024 – June 2026	Provides lifesaving humanitarian and rehabilitation assistance (protection, psychological first aid, health screenings, and access to civil documentation) to returnees from northeastern Syria at Al-Amal Center.
\$3.6 million September 2025 – July 2026	Provides essential child protection, education, and violence prevention services, and rehabilitation of WASH infrastructure benefitting children returning from northeast Syria at the al-Amal Center.

Source: State, vetting comment, 2/4/2025.









U.S. Airmen load GBU-31 munition systems onto an F-15E Strike Eagle in support of Operation Hawkeye Strike. (U.S. Air Force 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 inspectors general 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 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 July 1, 2025, through December 31, 2025. The three Lead IG agencies—DoD OIG, State OIG, and USAID OIG—and partner oversight agencies contributed the content of this report.

INFORMATION COLLECTION FROM AGENCIES AND OPEN SOURCES

To fulfill the congressional mandate to report on OAR, the DoD, State, and USAID OIGs gather data and information from Federal agencies and open sources. In our previous report, USAID staff identified challenges and risks with U.S. assistance programs in Ukraine. During the reporting period, USAID OIG followed up on the previously reported risks and challenges; however, staffing cuts at USAID and the ongoing operational drawdown at the agency limited the amount of information that USAID OIG could collect on USAID activities. Except in the cases of audits, inspections, investigations, and evaluations referenced in this report, the OIGs have not independently verified or audited the information collected through open-source research or from Federal agencies.

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 detail about the operation.

REPORT PRODUCTION

The DoD IG, as the Lead IG for this operation, is responsible for assembling and producing this report. The DoD, 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

From July 1 to December 31, 2025, the Lead IG and partner agencies issued three reports related to OIR. Completed reports by the Lead IG agencies are available on their respective web pages.

DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE OFFICE OF INSPECTOR GENERAL

Audit of DoD Hotline Allegations Concerning the Defense Cooperation Agreement with Kuwait

DODIG-2025-133; August 6, 2025

The stated objective of this audit is classified. However, it was related to the execution of a specific aspect of a Defense Cooperation Agreement (DCA) with Kuwait. The DoD OIG announced this audit in response to a DoD Hotline complaint, the specifics of which are not publicly releasable.

The DoD OIG found that the DoD did not fully execute the process under audit in accordance with the DCA. The DoD OIG substantiated the claims made in the DoD Hotline complaint. Additionally, the DoD OIG identified issues with security classification markings.

The DoD OIG made nine recommendations and identified funds that may be put to better use. Due to the classification of information contained in the findings and recommendations, they were not released publicly. During the audit, officials from USCENTCOM, USARCENT, and Area Support Group Kuwait took action to address aspects of the findings of the report.

Six recommendations were resolved and will be closed once the DoD OIG verifies that all agreed-upon actions have been taken. The remaining three recommendations are unresolved.

DEPARTMENT OF STATE OFFICE OF INSPECTOR GENERAL

Classified Inspection of Embassy Ankara and Constituent Posts, Türkiye

ISP-S-25-09; July 21, 2025

State OIG conducted this inspection to evaluate the programs and operations of Embassy Ankara and constituent posts. This report is classified. Details can be found in this quarterly report's classified appendix.

Audit of Department of State Efforts to Counter Iran-Backed Groups in the Middle East

AUD-GEER-25-25; July 23, 2025

State OIG conducted an audit to evaluate the effectiveness of State's efforts to counter groups backed by Iran. The audit assessed whether these initiatives were strategically developed with clear goals, implemented with effective coordination among bureaus, posts, and interagency partners, and designed to measure performance results to inform adjustments to State's approach. This report is classified. Details can be found in this quarterly report's classified appendix.

ARMY AUDIT AGENCY

International Cooperative Administrative Support Services Program

A-2025-0052-FMZ; July 10, 2025

The Army Audit Agency (AAA) conducted this audit to determine whether program reimbursement payments for International Cooperative Administrative Support Services (ICASS) were correct and supported, including payments made by U.S. Army Central (ARCENT) and Combined Joint Task Force-Operation Inherent Resolve (CJTF-OIR).

The AAA found that, after a review of six nonstatistically sampled posts, it could not verify the accuracy of payments and that approximately \$6.8 million in FY 2022 expenditures lacked sufficient supporting evidence across the sampled posts. Further, payments were certified without validating the underlying costs and lacked visibility over 69 percent of the Army's total budget, amounting to \$110 million of the total \$159 million managed by other commands.

This occurred because the Army had not formally designated roles and responsibilities for managing and executing ICASS and had not established guidance or standard operating procedures for reviewing, verifying, and approving ICASS documents and payments. As a result, the Army was at risk of paying more than its correct share of ICASS costs and paying for unnecessary services. Further, the lack of visibility and support for payment transactions impairs the Army's accountability of program funds and could negatively impact the Army's auditability goals.

The AAA recommended that the Secretary of the Army appoint an Office of Primary Responsibility (OPR) for the ICASS program. The OPR would issue policy and procedures, manage funding, and direct the transfer of payment execution responsibilities to individual commands. These actions aim to give the OPR complete visibility and accountability over the Army's ICASS budget and execution.



APPENDIX E

Ongoing Oversight Projects

Tables 13 and 14 list the titles and objectives for Lead IG and partner agencies' ongoing oversight projects related to OIR.

Table 13.

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

DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE OFFICE OF INSPECTOR GENERAL

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 (Project No. D2025-D000RJ-0044.000)

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.

Audit of the DoD's Oversight of Counter-Islamic State of Iraq and Syria Train and Equip Fund Equipment Designated for Iraq (Project No. D2025-D000RJ-0093.000)

To assess the effectiveness of the DoD's oversight of CTEF equipment designated for Iraq.

DEPARTMENT OF STATE OFFICE OF INSPECTOR GENERAL

Audit of the Bureau of Population, Refugees, and Migration's Efforts to Mitigate Terrorist Financing Risks in the Near East (Project No. 25AUD004)

To determine whether PRM monitored the design and operating effectiveness of mitigation measures for terrorist financing risks after the October 7, 2023, Hamas attack on Israel. Project scope impacts Operation Inherent Resolve.

Evaluation of Department of State Administration of Foreign Assistance Programs Transferred from the U.S. Agency for International Development (Project No. 25AUD049)

To identify State resources for administering foreign assistance awards on behalf of USAID.

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

Audit of USAID's Management of the Bureau for Humanitarian Assistance Warehouse in the United Arab Emirates (Project No. 88100724)

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.

Table 14.

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

DEPARTMENT OF HOMELAND SECURITY OFFICE OF INSPECTOR GENERAL

USCIS Priority-2 (P-2) Direct Access Program (DAP) for U.S. Affiliated Iraqis (Project No. 25-027-ISP-USCIS, ICE)

To determine whether U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) and U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE), Homeland Security Investigations (HSI) have taken corrective actions on potentially improper refugee resettlement determinations under the Priority-2 (P-2) Direct Access Program (DAP) for U.S.-affiliated Iraqis, and USCIS has implemented controls to detect and prevent fraud in the program.

APPENDIX F

Planned Oversight Projects

Tables 15 and 16 list the titles and objectives for Lead IG and partner agencies' planned oversight projects related to OIR.

Table 15.

Planned Oversight Projects Related to OIR by Lead IG Agencies, as of December 31, 2025

DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE OFFICE OF INSPECTOR GENERAL

Evaluation of the U.S. Central Command's Integration of Artificial Intelligence

To determine the extent to which the U.S. Central Command's current Artificial Intelligence integration strategies are contributing to operational effectiveness across key functional areas, including intelligence analysis, logistics, and cybersecurity.

DEPARTMENT OF STATE OFFICE OF INSPECTOR GENERAL

Audit of the Department of State's Counterterrorism Vetting

To determine whether State designed its risk-management and counterterrorism vetting procedures to prevent terrorist organizations from benefiting from U.S. foreign assistance funds. Project scope impacts Operation Inherent Resolve.

Evaluation of the Department of State's Administration of Its Continuing Foreign Assistance Programs

To describe State's administration of foreign assistance programs and associated awards approved to continue following the reviews required by Executive orders. Project scope impacts Operation Inherent Resolve.

Audit of the Department of State's Efforts to Combat Infectious Diseases in Selected Countries Through the Global Fund

To determine whether U.S. contributions to the Global Fund are achieving intended results relating to combating HIV, TB, and malaria in selected countries. Project scope impacts Operation Inherent Resolve.

Audit of the Department of State's Administration of Selected Foreign Assistance Funded Contracts

To determine whether State is administering selected foreign assistance-funded contracts in accordance with Federal and State requirements and whether those contracts are achieving desired results. Project scope impacts Operation Inherent Resolve.

Evaluation of the Department of State's Data Reliability of Foreign Assistance Awards

To determine the extent to which integrated USAID and State financial and award data are reliable and sufficient for State bureaus to make informed decisions, and to identify potential opportunities for State to expand its oversight of assistance awards. Project scope impacts Operation Inherent Resolve.

Evaluation of the Regional Bureaus' Administration of Foreign Assistance Programs

To 1) determine how the regional bureaus are administering foreign assistance programs and 2) assess the implementation of foreign assistance budgeting, program design, award design, monitoring, and evaluation. Project scope impacts Operation Inherent Resolve.

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

Review of USAID's Disposition of U.S. Government-Owned Property, Plant, Vehicles, and Equipment

To assess USAID's plans and actions to dispose of selected U.S. Government-owned assets.

Review of the Realignment and Re-organization of U.S. Foreign Assistance

To examine the actions USAID took to transfer its foreign assistance programs and operations to State, consistent with Executive Order 14169 and subsequent directives from the Acting USAID Administrator, and identify lessons learned to strengthen and ensure the continuity of foreign assistance programs and operations.

Review of Prompt Payment and Anti-Deficiency Act Violations

To assess the extent of prompt payment and potential Anti-Deficiency Act violations and actions USAID has taken to address them and prevent additional violations.

Review of Closeout Procedures for Terminated USAID Awards

To assess USAID’s efforts to close out terminated awards in accordance with Federal regulations and USAID policies and procedures.

Review of Stop Work Orders for USAID Awards

To determine how many USAID awards were paused, the amount of funding for the awards, and how many resumed or were terminated.

Table 16.

Planned Oversight Projects Related to OIR by Partner Agencies, as of December 31, 2025

AIR FORCE AUDIT AGENCY

9AF (AFCENT) Air Base Defense Center

To determine whether 9AF (AFCENT) Air Expeditionary Wings effectively established Base Air Defense Centers to protect personnel and mission operations.



APPENDIX G

Hotline and Investigations

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 these two quarters, the DoD OIG Hotline referred 85 cases and received 116 allegations 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 93 allegations and referred 74 cases and USAID OIG received 32 allegations. Most allegations during the reporting period related to personal misconduct, criminal allegations, procurement and contract administration and security.

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 these two quarters, investigative branches of the Lead IG agencies and their partner agencies ended with 21 open investigations, while 5 investigations were closed. No referrals were made to the Department of Justice during this period.

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	
AAAB	Al-Asad Air Base
AUIB	American University of Iraq–Baghdad
CJTF-OIR	Combined Joint Task Force–Operation Inherent Resolve
CSOJTF-C	Combined Special Operations Joint Task Force–Central
CTEF	Counter-ISIS Train and Equip Fund
CTS	Counter Terrorism Service (Iraq)
DIA	Defense Intelligence Agency
DoD	Department of Defense
EUM	end-use monitoring
FTF	foreign terrorist fighter
IAMG	Iran-aligned militia group
IDP	internally displaced person
IED	improvised explosive device
IHEC	Independent High Electoral Commission (Iraq)
IKR	Iraqi Kurdistan Region
ISF	Iraqi Security Forces
ISIS	Islamic State in Iraq and Syria
ISR	intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance
JOC-I	Joint Operations Command–Iraq
KCL	Kurdish Coordination Line
KDP	Kurdistan Democratic Party
KRG	Kurdistan Regional Government
LOE	line of effort
MERV	Middle Euphrates River Valley

Acronym	
MoPA	Ministry of Peshmerga Affairs
MT	metric ton
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organization
NEA	Bureau of Near Eastern Affairs (State)
NGO	nongovernmental organization
NLZ	Northern Landing Zone (Syria)
OCHA	Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (UN)
OIG	Office of Inspector General
OIR	Operation Inherent Resolve
OUSD(P)	Office of the Under Secretary of Defense for Policy
PKK	Kurdistan Workers’ Party
PM/WRA	Office of Weapons Removal and Abatement (State)
PUK	Patriotic Union of Kurdistan
SDF	Syrian Democratic Forces
SFA	Syrian Free Army
SNA	Syrian National Army
State	Department of State
Treasury	Department of the Treasury
UN	United Nations
UNHCR	UN Refugee Agency
UNICEF	UN Children’s Agency
UNSCR	UN Security Council Resolution
USAID	U.S. Agency for International Development
USCENTCOM	The U.S. Central Command
WASH	water, sanitation, and hygiene



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