



# OPERATION INHERENT RESOLVE

**AND OTHER OVERSEAS CONTINGENCY OPERATIONS**

LEAD INSPECTOR GENERAL REPORT TO THE UNITED STATES CONGRESS



**OCTOBER 1, 2018–DECEMBER 31, 2018**

## ABOUT THIS REPORT

In January 2013, legislation was enacted creating the Lead Inspector General (Lead IG) framework for oversight of overseas contingency operations. This legislation, which amended the Inspector General Act, requires the Inspectors General of the Department of Defense (DoD), Department of State (DoS), and U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) to provide quarterly reports to Congress on designated overseas contingency operations. The DoD Inspector General (IG) has been designated as the Lead IG for Operation Inherent Resolve (OIR). The DoS IG is the Associate Inspector General for OIR. The USAID IG participates in oversight for the operation.

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

The Lead IG agencies collectively carry out their statutory missions related to these overseas contingency operations, to:

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

### METHODOLOGY

To produce this quarterly report, the Lead IG agencies gather data and information from their agencies and open sources, including congressional testimony, policy research organizations, press conferences, think tanks, and media reports. DoD, DoS, and USAID officials also provide written responses to quarterly data call questions from Lead IG agencies. This quarter, due to the partial government shutdown, the DoS and USAID did not participate in the production of this report.

The sources of information contained in this report are listed in endnotes or notes to tables and figures. Except in the case of audits, inspections, or evaluations mentioned or referenced in this report, the Lead IG agencies have not verified or audited all of the data and information provided by the agencies. For further details on the methodology for this report, see Appendix A.

### CLASSIFIED APPENDIX

This report also includes an appendix containing classified information related to OIR and three classified operations: Operation Yukon Journey, the Northwest Africa Counterterrorism overseas contingency operation, and the East Africa Counterterrorism overseas contingency operation. The classified appendix is provided to relevant agencies and congressional committees.

## FOREWORD

We are pleased to submit this Lead Inspector General quarterly report to the U.S. Congress on Operation Inherent Resolve. This report discharges our individual and collective agency oversight responsibilities pursuant to sections 2, 4, and 8L of the Inspector General Act of 1978.

The United States launched OIR in 2014 to defeat the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS) and to set the conditions for follow on operations to increase regional stability. The strategy to defeat ISIS includes military operations, as well as support for local security forces, diplomacy, governance, and stabilization programs. This report provides information on the status of OIR in line with strategic oversight areas adopted by the Lead IG agencies:

- Security
- Support to mission

This report discusses the planned, ongoing, and completed oversight work conducted by the Lead IG Offices of the Inspector General and our partner oversight agencies during the period from October 1, 2018, through December 31, 2018.

Due to the partial government shutdown and the furlough of staff at the Department of State and the U.S. Agency for International Development, this report does not contain sections on Governance and Civil Society, Humanitarian Assistance, and Stabilization, which are provided by the Department of State and U.S. Agency for International Development Offices of Inspector General. The Department of State and U.S. Agency for International Development also did not review this report or provide input. However, the Department of State and U.S. Agency for International Development Inspectors General reviewed and concurred with the content of this report. In addition, the Departments of Justice and Treasury did not provide content related to prosecutions and actions against terrorist finances typically included in this report.

Working in close collaboration, we remain committed to providing comprehensive oversight and timely reporting on these contingency operations.



Handwritten signature of Glenn A. Fine in black ink.

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



Handwritten signature of Steve A. Linick in black ink.

**Steve A. Linick**  
Inspector General  
U.S. Department of State



Handwritten signature of Ann Calvaresi Barr in black ink.

**Ann Calvaresi Barr**  
Inspector General  
U.S. Agency for International  
Development



**On the Cover**

(Top row): A U.S. Marine learns how to utilize a recoilless rifle near At Tanf Garrison, Syria (U.S. Marine Corps photo); An instructor from the Baghdad Fighting School conducts cordon and strike training with Iraqi soldiers at Camp Taji, Iraq (U.S. Army photo); U.S. Army trooper provides security on the banks of the Euphrates River during a routine patrol, Iraq (DoD photo); A CJTF-OIR convoy passes through downtown al Qaim, Iraq (U.S. Army photo). (Bottom row): Local Syrian security forces engage practice targets during a small unit tactics rehearsal (U.S. Army photo).

## MESSAGE FROM THE LEAD INSPECTOR GENERAL



**Glenn A. Fine**

As required by the Inspector General Act, this is the Lead Inspector General (Lead IG) quarterly report on the status of Operation Inherent Resolve (OIR) and three classified overseas contingency operations in Africa and the Middle East.

This is our 16th public quarterly report on OIR and 2nd report on the three classified operations. This statutorily required report summarizes the events and status of each operation during this quarter, and describes the related Lead IG and partner agency oversight work. We also are providing a classified appendix on these operations to Department of Defense (DoD) leaders and appropriate congressional committees.

Near the end of this quarter, in December 2018, the Administration announced that it would withdraw U.S. forces from Syria. Because of the significance of this announcement, the DoD Office of Inspector General (DoD OIG) submitted supplemental questions to the DoD at the close of the quarter seeking further information on the status of OIR and the efforts to defeat ISIS in Syria and Iraq. The responses we received from the DoD are described in this report.

According to the DoD, while U.S.-backed Syrian forces have continued the fight to retake the remaining ISIS strongholds in Syria, ISIS remains a potent force of battle-hardened and well-disciplined fighters that “could likely resurge in Syria” absent continued counterterrorism pressure. According to the DoD, ISIS is still able to coordinate offensives and counter-offensives, as well as operate as a decentralized insurgency.

In Iraq, according to the DoD, security has improved in Iraq’s cities during this quarter, but ISIS remains active in rural parts of the country. In addition, the DoD reported that the Iraqi Security Forces are still reliant on United States and Coalition support.

During the quarter, the Lead IG and partner agencies continued our required oversight of OIR, completing nine audit, evaluation, and inspection reports related to OIR, and conducting 9 open investigations involving grant and procurement fraud, corruption, theft, computer intrusions, and human trafficking allegations.

We thank the dedicated employees of each Lead IG agency who conduct this important oversight work and prepare these quarterly reports.

Finally, we appreciate the cooperation of the agencies that provided information for this report.

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Glenn A. Fine".

**Glenn A. Fine**

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





A Combined Joint Task Force (CJTF-OIR) convoy passes through downtown al Qaim, Iraq. (U.S. Army photo)

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

*The DoS and USAID, and their Offices of Inspector General, experienced a lapse in appropriations beginning in December 2018. Due to the suspension of affected agency functions, the DoS and USAID OIGs were unable to report on OCO-related developments this quarter in the areas of governance and civil society, humanitarian assistance, and stabilization. Their agencies did not review or provide input to this report. Limited updates on the DoS and USAID OIGs' oversight activities have been included in the report.*

### EVENTS IN SYRIA

#### THE UNITED STATES ANNOUNCES IT WILL WITHDRAW TROOPS FROM SYRIA

On December 19, President Donald Trump announced that the U.S. military would withdraw the approximately 2,200 U.S. troops stationed in Syria.<sup>1</sup> The Secretary of Defense subsequently ordered the withdrawal of all U.S. forces from Syria, and according to the Department of Defense (DoD), the withdrawal process was ongoing as of the time of publication of this report.<sup>2</sup>

The announcement came at the end of the quarter, after the DoD OIG had already sent to the DoD its quarterly request for information on OIR. In early January 2019, the DoD OIG submitted additional questions to the DoD related to the announced withdrawal and the impact on DoD plans and policies. For example, the DoD OIG sought DoD assessments on the impact of the withdrawal, including the capability of the Turkish military, Syrian regime forces, and Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) to ensure the enduring defeat of ISIS in Syria. In addition, the DoD OIG sent to the DoD supplemental questions seeking information on ISIS in Syria, the status of foreign ISIS fighters held by the SDF, Russian and Iranian influence in Syria, and efforts to stabilize liberated areas in eastern Syria.

The DoD provided classified answers to most of these questions. Those answers are discussed in the classified appendix to this report, which is provided to Congressional committees.

On January 16, 2019, U.S. Central Command (USCENTCOM) also provided the following answer to the question about the impact of a U.S. troop departure on ISIS in Syria:

ISIS may conduct opportunistic attacks on U.S. personnel as they withdraw but will leverage the event as a “victory” in its media. ISIS remains an active insurgent group in both Iraq and Syria. If Sunni socio-economic, political, and sectarian grievances are not adequately addressed by the national and local governments of Iraq and Syria it is very likely that ISIS will have the opportunity to set conditions for future resurgence and territorial control. Currently, ISIS is regenerating key functions and capabilities more quickly in Iraq than in Syria, but absent sustained [counterterrorism] pressure, ISIS could likely resurge in Syria within six to twelve months and regain limited territory in the [Middle Euphrates River Valley (MERV)].<sup>3</sup>



**A Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) member fires a 120mm round near Hajin, Syria. (DoD photo)**





This report discusses in more detail the capabilities of ISIS in Iraq and Syria, the capabilities of Iraqi and Syrian forces, and the conditions on the ground during the quarter. The classified appendix further discusses these issues.

### **U.S. OFFICIALS SAY NO CHANGE IN SYRIA POLICY**

In January 2018, the U.S. Government described five desired end states for Syria. These included the “enduring defeat” of ISIS, a resolution to the Syrian civil war under the auspices of the Geneva process, the removal of Iranian and Iranian-backed forces from Syria, the removal of weapons of mass destruction in Syria, and rebuilding so that displaced Syrians can return home.<sup>4</sup> The Office of the Assistant Secretary of Defense for International Security Affairs (OUSD(P)/ISA) reported to the DoD OIG in June 2018 that United States was still pursuing the same five end states.<sup>5</sup>

Last quarter, OUSD(P)/ISA reported to the DoD OIG that the U.S. troop presence in Syria provided the United States with the “ancillary benefit” of deterring Iran, and that the troops afforded the U.S. “leverage to influence the political resolution of the Syrian conflict and humanitarian crisis.”<sup>6</sup> OUSD(P)/ISA reported that the DoD sought to set the conditions for the safe, voluntary return of refugees “through the defeat of ISIS and ensuring stabilization efforts.”<sup>7</sup>

This quarter, OUSD(P)/ISA reported to the DoD OIG that it “remains committed to the enduring defeat of ISIS and supports DoS efforts to reach a political settlement under United Nations Security Council Resolution 2254,” which OUSD(P)/ISA reported will be “critical in addressing the ISIS threat across all of Syria.”<sup>8</sup>

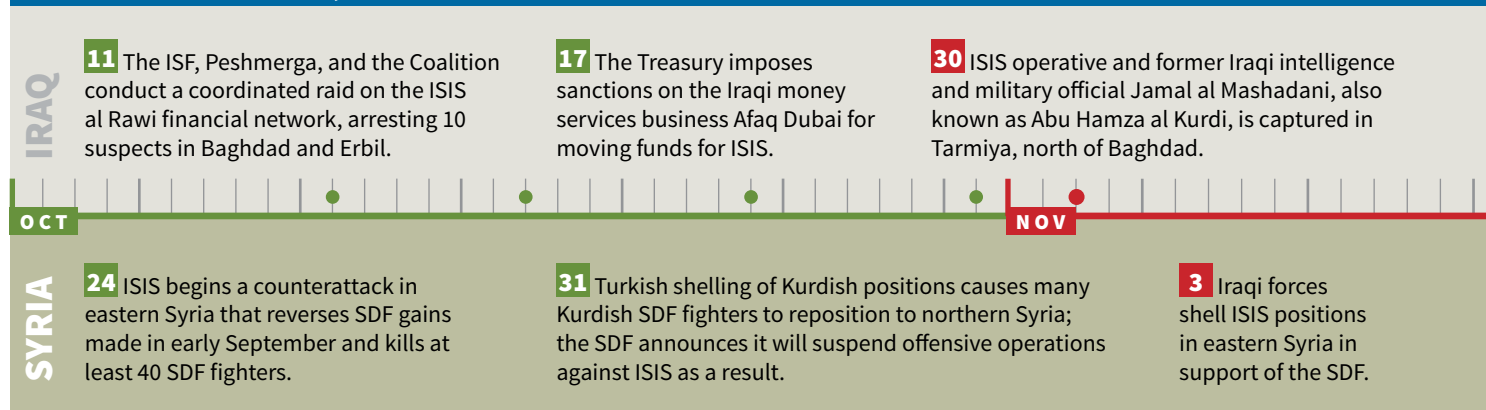
Following the President’s announcement in December 2018 to withdraw troops from Syria, Secretary of State Mike Pompeo stated that the policy objectives of defeating ISIS and deterring Iran had not changed.<sup>9</sup>

## SDF CONDUCTS OPERATIONS TO RETAKE REMAINING ISIS STRONGHOLD IN SYRIA

Throughout most of the quarter, the SDF waged a campaign to retake the last territory held by ISIS in Syria.<sup>10</sup> In mid-December, after months of fighting that exacted heavy casualties on the SDF and ISIS, SDF captured Hajin, a town in the MERV, which is located in eastern Syria near the Iraqi border.<sup>11</sup> According to news reports, significant fighting remained in the areas around the town.<sup>12</sup>

According to Combined Joint Task Force-Operation Inherent Resolve (CJTF-OIR), the SDF still relies heavily on Coalition air support both for protection and for enabling offensive operations against ISIS.<sup>13</sup> CJTF-OIR described the SDF as “tenacious fighters with a degree of basic military training to function as infantrymen.”<sup>14</sup> CJTF-OIR said that the SDF had demonstrated that it could “counter ISIS in neutral areas,” where the SDF has “countered the ISIS threat swiftly and decisively.”<sup>15</sup> However, CJTF-OIR reported that the SDF has only “modest organic indirect fire resources,” meaning that the SDF has limited mortar and artillery assets available without Coalition support.<sup>16</sup> CJTF-OIR described Coalition support to the SDF—both

### SELECTED KEY EVENTS, 10/1/2018-12/31/2018





**Local Syrian security forces members engage practice targets during a small unit tactics rehearsal. (U.S. Army photo)**

“physically in the form of close air support and indirect fire,” and “mentally” in the form of advice and assistance—as a “significant force multiplier.” In late December 2018, CJTF-OIR reported to the DoD OIG that “the Coalition’s support is vital to the SDF’s ability to defeat ISIS in the MERV.”<sup>17</sup>

CJTF-OIR stated that during this quarter, in late October 2018, the SDF offensive against ISIS in the MERV had been suspended in response to cross-border attacks by Turkey against SDF positions in Kurdish areas of northeastern Syria.<sup>18</sup> SDF offensive operations against ISIS resumed in mid-November, according to a press release from the Kurdish People’s Protection Units (YPG).<sup>19</sup> According to OUSD(P)/ISA, the SDF is a multi-ethnic force comprising Kurds, Arabs, and other ethnic groups. The OUSD(P)/ISA said that the SDF also has some elements that belong to the YPG.<sup>20</sup> According to media sources, Turkey views the YPG as a terrorist organization allied with Turkish separatists.<sup>21</sup> Media reports also stated that throughout the quarter, Turkey’s President Recep Tayyip Erdogan threatened to invade northeastern Syria to eliminate the YPG.<sup>22</sup>

CJTF-OIR reported that this quarter the SDF continued to hold defensive positions in the MERV during the suspension of offensive operations.<sup>23</sup> CJTF-OIR reported that the Syrian Arab Coalition (SAC), a force belonging to the SDF, is “probably unable to conduct offensive operations against ISIS without the YPG.”<sup>24</sup> The force includes the SAC and elements that belong to the YPG in addition to other groups, OUSD(P)/ISA said.<sup>25</sup> In December 2018, CJTF-OIR reported to the DoD OIG that the YPG’s “experience in fighting ISIS, along with U.S. equipment and training to the SDF over a number of years, is paramount to stability and efforts to defeat ISIS in the MERV.”<sup>26</sup>

**10** The fortified Green Zone in Baghdad is opened to traffic, highlighting increased confidence with security in the city.

**26** President Trump visits U.S. forces in Iraq.

**30** Syrian President Assad authorizes the ISF to carry out airstrikes against ISIS in Syria without requesting permission.

DEC

**11** The SDF announces the resumption of offensive operations against ISIS in the MERV.

**14** The SDF captures Hajin, ISIS’s last urban stronghold in the Middle Euphrates River Valley. Fighting continues in the countryside.

**19** President Trump announces the withdrawal of U.S. forces in Syria.

## TURKEY OFFERS TO TAKE OVER FIGHT AGAINST ISIS IN SYRIA

In addition to threatening to attack Kurdish YPG forces, in December 2018, Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan offered to deploy Turkish and Turkish-backed Syrian forces to fight ISIS in Syria after the United States withdraws troops from Syria, according to media reports.<sup>27</sup> President Erdogan was claiming in December that ISIS was defeated.<sup>28</sup> In an op-ed piece published on January 7, 2019, President Erdogan said Turkey was the only country with the “power and commitment” to “protect the interests of the United States” in Syria once U.S. forces leave.<sup>29</sup>

In 2016, Turkey sent ground troops into Syria to fight ISIS in the northern city of al Bab, near the Turkish border.<sup>30</sup> However, Turkey has not participated in ground operations against ISIS in Syria since 2017, nor have Turkish forces participated in the fight against ISIS in the MERV, which is approximately 230 miles away from al Bab and the Turkish border.<sup>31</sup>

## DOD: ISIS REMAINS A BATTLE-HARDENED FORCE

At the end of December 2018, CJTF-OIR reported to the DoD OIG that ISIS remains a battle-hardened and well-disciplined force.<sup>32</sup> CJTF-OIR said that ISIS is able to coordinate offensives and counter-offensives, as well as operate as a decentralized insurgency.<sup>33</sup> CJTF-OIR also reported that morale among ISIS fighters remains “high” and that they seem “unfazed by Coalition airstrikes.”<sup>34</sup> However, in January 2019, CJTF-OIR reported to the DoD OIG that ISIS’s morale was “trending downward.”<sup>35</sup>

**U.S. and Turkish tactical vehicles take a defensive posture during rehearsals in Turkey. (U.S. Army photo)**





CJTF-OIR reports estimates

**2,000**

ISIS Fighters, remained in and around the Middle Euphrates River Valley this quarter

In December, CJTF-OIR reported to the OIG that ISIS has established a strong defensive position in its remaining territory in Syria, and remains capable of coordinating military offensives and counteroffensives in the MERV.<sup>36</sup> CJTF-OIR reported in late December that ISIS temporarily gained about 10 miles of territory near the Iraqi border in a series of successful counterattacks against the SDF.<sup>37</sup> ISIS staged the offensives during inclement weather in October and November knowing that decreased visibility would hinder the close air support that the Coalition provides to the SDF, CJTF-OIR reported.<sup>38</sup> However, CJTF-OIR reported that the SDF were able eventually to regain the lost territory in December and disrupt ISIS momentum.<sup>39</sup>

In January, CJTF-OIR reported to the DoD OIG that public estimates of 2,000 ISIS fighters remained in and around the MERV this quarter were correct.<sup>40</sup> DoD officials also estimated that ISIS continues to attract foreign fighters to Syria and Iraq each month. CJTF-OIR reported to the DoD OIG that the actual number is unknown but estimated that it is “most likely 50 per month.”<sup>41</sup>

According to the DoD and independent analysts, ISIS fighters also continued this quarter to operate in territory outside the DoD’s areas of operation in Syria. The DoD operates in northeast Syria and around the At Tanf garrison near the Iraqi and Jordanian border.<sup>42</sup>

In December, the Office of the Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for Counter Narcotics and Global Threats (OUSD(P)/CN/GT) reported to the DoD OIG that ISIS still generates revenue in Syria from limited oil smuggling operations, taxation, and criminal activities such as extortion and kidnapping in areas they do not control. In addition, ISIS continues to receive external donations and maintains cash reserves, and ISIS branches worldwide contribute varying degrees of support to ISIS in Syria.<sup>43</sup>

OUSD(P)/CN/GT also reported to the DoD OIG in December that efforts continued this quarter to disrupt ISIS’s ability to generate revenue by “fusing intelligence and military operations” in Syria. For instance, Coalition airstrikes cut off key communications hubs and transit routes, and disrupted oil and gas production facilities, OUSD(P)/CN/GT reported.<sup>44</sup>

## EVENTS IN IRAQ

### ISIS RETAINS STRENGTH IN RURAL IRAQ

According to media reports and to DoD components, security improved in Iraq’s cities during this quarter, but ISIS remained active in rural parts of the country. CJTF-OIR reported that ISIS tactics this quarter included improvised explosive devices (IEDs), assassinations, robbery, and money laundering.<sup>45</sup> The difficulty of securing remote, rugged terrain has allowed ISIS greater freedom to move and to threaten civilians and security forces, according to OUSD(P)/ISA, CJTF-OIR, and news reports.<sup>46</sup>

OUSD(P)/CN/GT reported to the DoD OIG that ISIS continued to generate revenue in Iraq through extorting civilians, smuggling, ransom, trafficking, and other criminal activity.<sup>47</sup> Poor weather also helped ISIS cells evade the ISF and the Coalition this quarter, as it hampered the use of surveillance aircraft and led to the cancellation of some clearance operations, CJTF-OIR said.<sup>48</sup>

Despite adverse conditions, clearing operations and raids targeted ISIS's rural hideouts and urban cells throughout the quarter, CJTF-OIR said. The ISF conducted 77 battalion-size clearance operations, and the Coalition and the ISF carried out a coordinated raid on an ISIS financial network in Baghdad and Erbil.<sup>49</sup>

Several events this quarter demonstrated improvements in security. The Shia Arbaeen pilgrimage to Karbala City occurred this quarter without major disruption from ISIS.<sup>50</sup> In Baghdad, improving security led to the reopening of portions of the fortified Green Zone to civilian traffic.<sup>51</sup> The United Nations reported that civilian casualties in Iraq declined this quarter to their lowest level since November 2012.<sup>52</sup>

According to CJTF-OIR and news reports, challenges to completely defeating ISIS in Iraq include the group's rural strength, its tunnels and safe houses, the continued trickle of foreign fighters, the difficulty in securing the Iraq-Syria border, and the lack of stability in Sunni areas.<sup>53</sup>

## THE IRAQI SECURITY FORCES STILL RELY ON COALITION SUPPORT IN INTELLIGENCE AND INSTITUTIONAL REFORM

CJTF-OIR reported that in Iraq the ISF is still heavily reliant on Coalition enablers in several functions, especially with regard to intelligence gathering and analysis. Challenges to the ISF's intelligence efforts include weaknesses in the system for tasking intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance (ISR) assets, the lack of sufficient intelligence personnel, and the absence of procedures to either vet intelligence received from human sources or to exploit easily accessible public open sources, as discussed on pages 36.

Other ISF weaknesses identified by CJTF-OIR include precision strike capabilities, logistics, overlap of security forces, training, and campaign planning, as well as tactical skills such as command and control and basic infantry tactics.<sup>54</sup>

According to CJTF-OIR, this quarter Coalition advisers worked with the ISF, the Ministry of Defense, and the Ministry of Interior to develop Iraqi defense policy, improve logistical processes, and create an inter-ministerial medical committee. The Coalition reported that, despite some momentum in those efforts, "many key ISF leaders have the knowledge and influence to enact reforms that have been encouraged by the international community for years but lack the will to do so through concrete actions."<sup>55</sup> OUSD(P)/ISA stated that key bureaucratic and institutional obstacles also hamper efforts to reform the deeply dysfunctional bureaucracy and to root out corruption.<sup>56</sup>

CJTF-OIR reported improvements to the Iraqi Air Force this quarter in joint operations with Coalition personnel and in the field of joint search and rescue operations.<sup>57</sup> However, it stated that going forward, the Air Force will face challenges from relying on Coalition logistics, the overall lack of information sharing amongst the Iraqi security apparatus, and limited budgetary resources. While the Air Force suffers from many of the same deficiencies present in the rest of the defense apparatus, it benefits from experienced and resourceful personnel who are receptive to Coalition assistance, CJTF-OIR said.<sup>58</sup>

**Challenges to completely defeating ISIS in Iraq include the group's rural strength, its tunnels and safe houses, the continued trickle of foreign fighters, the difficulty in securing the Iraq-Syria border, and the lack of stability in Sunni areas.**

According to CJTF-OIR, about 13,300 ISF personnel received Coalition training this quarter.<sup>59</sup> Coalition training sites will be handed over to the ISF after certain conditions are met, with the objective of transferring all sites to ISF management by 2020.<sup>60</sup> Along with Coalition training, the NATO Mission in Iraq is expanding its activities. The NATO Mission will focus on higher-level institutional development, especially on providing advice in the fields of professional military education and within the Ministry of Defense and Office of the National Security Advisor.<sup>61</sup>

## ISF FRICTION WITH THE PESHMERGA AND THE POPULAR MOBILIZATION FORCES

Since the Kurdish independence referendum in September 2017, the ISF and the Peshmerga have operated separate checkpoints between the Iraqi Kurdistan Region and areas disputed between the central government and the Kurdish Regional Government.<sup>62</sup> According to media reports, ISIS has been able to exploit this divide to maneuver by taking advantage of the lack of coordination between the two sides.<sup>63</sup>

According to CJTF-OIR, this quarter, the ISF and Peshmerga conducted no joint operations, but several coordinated counter-ISIS strikes and clearance operations were conducted.<sup>64</sup> CJTF-OIR also reported working to set up joint security centers manned by both the ISF and Peshmerga to facilitate coordination and cooperation between those forces.<sup>65</sup>

The lack of coordination between the Popular Mobilization Forces (PMF) and the ISF continued this quarter. CJTF-OIR reported to the DoD OIG that competition over areas to operate and influence between the PMF and the ISF will likely result in violence, abuse, and tension in areas where both entities operate.<sup>66</sup>

**A Kurdish Peshmerga commander prepares to inspect his company's formation prior to a graduation ceremony from an eight-week unit level training course. (U.S. Army National Guard photo)**



This quarter, the Iraqi government began to implement plans to pay PMF personnel at the same rate as ISF soldiers. CJTF-OIR and OUSD(P) said that while this plan could help the government institute stricter control over the PMF, it would provide financial benefits to groups supported by Iran.<sup>67</sup> OUSD(P) stated that political disagreements over government formation prevented any new developments on finalizing the status of the PMF this quarter.<sup>68</sup>

## Classified Operations in the Middle East and Africa

As required by the IG Act, the Lead IG reports on three classified overseas contingency operations (OCO) designated by the Secretary of Defense in February 2018: Operation Yukon Journey, the Northwest Africa Counterterrorism overseas contingency operation, and the East Africa Counterterrorism overseas contingency operation. These operations seek to degrade al Qaeda and ISIS-affiliated terrorists in the Middle East and specific regions of Africa.

The classified appendix to this report discusses developments in these three classified OCOs. As discussed in the previous Lead IG quarterly report for OIR, the DoD classified the locations where these operations are taking place to protect intelligence and counterterrorism operations.

Last quarter, the DoD was unable to provide unclassified answers to DoD OIG questions about why these operations were designated as overseas contingency operations and what authorities and benefits resulted from the designation.

This quarter, the Joint Staff reported to the DoD OIG that all three operations were preexisting counterterrorism campaigns. DoD review of the orders determined that the operations fit the definition of Section 101(a)(13) of Title 10, U.S. Code, that states a contingency operation is one “in which members of the armed forces are or may become involved in military actions, operations, or hostilities against an enemy of the United States or against an opposing military force.”<sup>69</sup>

The Joint Staff also reported to the DoD OIG that the OCO designation confers financial flexibilities and benefits. Those benefits include waivers on acquisition limits; the ability for DoD components to request the authority to obligate Service Operation and Maintenance funds “for temporary military construction”; and additional Service member entitlements, including disability severance pay, combat-related special compensation, death gratuity, and savings deposit program.<sup>70</sup>

The Joint Staff also reported that there were no changes in the operations that necessitated the OCO designation, and that pre-OCO operations did not differ from post-OCO operations. The Joint Staff noted that, just as the OCOs are classified, the pre-designation operations were classified.<sup>71</sup>

In addition, the Joint Staff reported that these three operations are DoD operations and that no other U.S. Government agencies have any “assigned responsibilities...although they may have supporting or complementary responsibilities.”<sup>72</sup>

Further details of these operations are contained in the classified appendix to this report that is provided to appropriate congressional committees.



## LEAD IG OVERSIGHT ACTIVITIES

The Lead IG and partner agencies conducted oversight work related to audits, inspections, and evaluations; Lead IG investigations; and hotline activities from October 1 through December 31, 2018. However, due to the lapse in appropriations affecting the DoS and USAID OIGs, the oversight information provided below includes only limited information on the details of their activities.

Table 1.

### Oversight Reports Issued this Quarter

Report	Release Date
<b>DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE OFFICE OF INSPECTOR GENERAL</b>	
<i>Evaluation of Social Media Exploitation Procedures Supporting Operation Inherent Resolve (OIR)</i> DODIG-2019-042	December 28, 2018
<i>U.S. Air Forces in Europe Plans for the Procurement and Pre-Positioning of Deployable Air Base Kits</i> DODIG-2019-040	December 27, 2018
<b>DEPARTMENT OF STATE OFFICE OF INSPECTOR GENERAL</b>	
<i>Audit of the Bureau of Near Eastern Affairs Selection and Management of Contract Oversight Personnel in Iraq</i> AUD-MERO-19-10	November 30, 2018
<i>Inspection of the Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor</i> ISP-I-19-11	October 31, 2018
<i>Inspection of the Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor's Foreign Assistance Program Management</i> ISP-I-19-12	October 31, 2018
<b>AIR FORCE AUDIT AGENCY</b>	
<i>Munitions Management</i> F2019-001-RA0000	November 7, 2018
<b>DEPARTMENT OF HOMELAND SECURITY OFFICE OF INSPECTOR GENERAL</b>	
<i>CPB's Searches of Electronic Devices at Ports of Entry</i> OIG-19-02	December 3, 2018
<b>GOVERNMENT ACCOUNTABILITY OFFICE</b>	
<i>OPERATION CONTRACT SUPPORT: Actions Needed to Strengthen DoD Vendor Vetting Efforts</i> GAO-19-37C (Classified)	December 20, 2018
<i>SPECIAL OPERATIONS FORCES: Actions Needed to Manage Increased Demand and Improve Data for Assessing Readiness</i> GAO-19-149C (Classified)	October 12, 2018

## Audits, Inspections, and Evaluations

The Lead IG and partner agencies completed nine audit, evaluation, and inspection reports related to OIR from October 1 through December 31, 2018. These reports examined various activities that support OIR, including readiness, foreign assistance programs, contract management, munitions accountability, and port of entry activities. Table 1 lists the released reports by agency.

During this quarter, the Lead IG agencies and their oversight partners had 35 ongoing and 19 planned oversight projects for OIR.

## Investigations

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

During this quarter, Lead IG investigations resulted in 1 arrest, 2 criminal charges, and 2 convictions. These cases involved conspiracy to commit export violations, bribery, and money laundering.

Investigative branches of the Lead IG agencies and their partner agencies closed 10 investigations, initiated 18 new investigations, and coordinated on 91 open investigations. The open investigations involve grant and procurement fraud, corruption, theft, computer intrusions, and human trafficking allegations.



**A Coalition Forces member prepares five 120mm mortar rounds during a fire mission in the Middle Euphrates River Valley, Syria. (U.S. Army photo)**







U.S. Army soldiers fire a M777 Howitzer supporting the SDF and ISF in Syria as they clear the last remaining pockets of ISIS from the MERV and prevent them from fleeing into Iraq. (U.S. Army photo)

# THE QUARTER IN REVIEW

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## THE QUARTER IN REVIEW

### DoD: Without Counterterrorism Pressure in Syria, ISIS “Could Likely Resurge Within Six to Twelve Months”

On December 19, 2018, President Trump announced that the United States would withdraw the approximately 2,200 troops from Syria.<sup>1</sup> The Secretary of Defense subsequently ordered the withdrawal of all U.S. forces from Syria and, according to the DoD, the withdrawal process was ongoing as of the time of publication of this report.<sup>2</sup>

The announcement to withdraw U.S. troops from Syria took place after the DoD OIG had submitted its quarterly request for information to the DoD that serves as the primary source of data for Lead IG quarterly reports. On January 3 and 8, 2019, the DoD OIG submitted supplemental questions to the DoD Office of the Assistant Secretary of Defense for Policy/

A Coalition convoy stops to test fire in the Middle Euphrates River Valley in the Dayr az Zawr province, Syria. (U.S. Army photo)



International Security Affairs Turkey, Syria, Iraq and D-ISIS Task Force directors (OUSD(P)/ISA, United States Central Command (USCENTCOM), United States European Command (USEUCOM), and the Defense Intelligence Agency (DIA) regarding the withdrawal.

The DoD OIG asked an overarching question of the DoD offices: given that the stated U.S. policy goals of ensuring the enduring defeat of ISIS in Syria, the removal of Iranian militias and proxies, and a resolution to the Syrian civil war had not occurred at the time of the withdrawal announcement, how would the enduring defeat of ISIS be achieved after the withdrawal of U.S. forces from Syria, or did strategic goals for Syria change? OUSD(P)/ISA reported that the withdrawal plan was in development and therefore it was not able to provide answers to these questions.<sup>3</sup>

The DoD OIG also asked for an assessment of the SDF's capability and intent to pursue the enduring defeat of ISIS in Syria, and an assessment of the risks and challenges to Coalition troops and campaign plan goals associated with the near-term withdrawal of U.S. forces from Syria. OUSD(P)/ISA responded that it was not yet prepared to provide an answer to the question.<sup>4</sup>

USCENTCOM replied that it was "unable to provide definitive responses" to those questions. The DIA provided classified answers that are included in the classified appendix to this report.

Additional questions posed by the DoD OIG to the DoD in response to the withdrawal announcement included:

- To what extent has the Turkish military been fighting ISIS in Syria, how significant have efforts been, and have they been effective at defeating ISIS over the long term?
- Absent U.S. support, what capabilities and intent does the Turkish military have to pursue the enduring defeat of ISIS in Syria?
- What enablers or specific capabilities do Turkish forces lack for accomplishing this mission?
- What immediate impact will a U.S. departure have on the resurgence of ISIS in Syria?
- What capabilities and intent does the Syrian regime have to pursue the continued and enduring defeat of ISIS in Syria?
- What is the capability of the Iraqi Security Forces (ISF) to fight ISIS in Syria, both with Coalition support and without Coalition support?
- Does the Coalition intend to continue to support the ISF's cross-border operations against ISIS in Syria following a U.S. military withdrawal from Syria?
- What potential operational and/or strategic impact will the U.S. troop withdrawal have on Iranian and Russian influence in Syria; civilians living in the areas of Syria where U.S. forces are leaving; the Manbij agreement; and the People's Protection Units (YPG) forces in the SDF?

The classified appendix contains the classified answers provided to these questions by USCENTCOM, USEUCOM, and the DIA. USCENTCOM provided the following

**A U.S. Army trooper provides security on the banks of the Euphrates River during a routine patrol in Iraq. (DoD photo)**



unclassified answer to the question about what immediate impact a U.S. troop departure will have on the resurgence of ISIS in Syria:

ISIS may conduct opportunistic attacks on U.S. personnel as they withdraw but will leverage the event as a “victory” in its media. ISIS remains an active insurgent group in both Iraq and Syria. If Sunni socio-economic, political, and sectarian grievances are not adequately addressed by the national and local governments of Iraq and Syria it is very likely that ISIS will have the opportunity to set conditions for future resurgence and territorial control. Currently, ISIS is regenerating key functions and capabilities more quickly in Iraq than in Syria, but absent sustained [counterterrorism] pressure, ISIS could likely resurge in Syria within six to twelve months and regain limited territory in the [Middle Euphrates River Valley (MERV)].<sup>5</sup>

The DoD OIG will continue to report on these issues in greater detail in the next quarterly report. This report focuses on the conditions on the ground and the status of the fight against ISIS in Iraq and Syria during the quarter.

## **U.S. Troops Stationed in Iraq Will Remain**

During a visit to Al Assad Air Base west of Baghdad on December 26, 2018, President Trump stated that the United States will maintain a troop presence in Iraq “to prevent an ISIS resurgence and to protect U.S. interests,” including watching over Iran.<sup>6</sup> The President also stated that troops in Iraq would be able to launch raids and operations into Syria to target remaining ISIS elements.<sup>7</sup>

The American military relationship with Iraq has been complicated by Iraq’s efforts to complete the formation of a new government after the May 2018 parliamentary elections. Iraqi lawmakers have been unable to agree on new heads of the Defense and Interior Ministries, which are the key beneficiaries of American security cooperation. As of the end of the quarter, pro-Iranian lawmakers continued to propose Falih Fayad for the position of Minister of Interior. He is considered a controversial candidate who currently leads the Popular Mobilization Forces (PMF), an umbrella organization of approximately 50 militias, including some backed by Iran, according to independent analysts and news reports.<sup>8</sup>



According to news reports, Iraqi officials have expressed concern that without U.S. support, ISIS could have an opening to reemerge in Iraq.<sup>9</sup> Based on information the DoD has provided to the DoD OIG in the last two quarters, a long-term U.S. military presence will be required to achieve the stated policy goals of securing the “enduring defeat” of ISIS and building the capacity of the ISF. While U.S. training of the ISF has improved several capabilities, the DoD continues to report to the DoD OIG that the ISF will likely rely on the Coalition for years to fill ISF gaps in intelligence capabilities and deficiencies in “command and control, leadership, physical resilience, and ability to execute basic minor infantry tactics.”<sup>10</sup> The capabilities of the ISF are discussed in detail on page 36 of this report. The classified appendix further discusses Iranian and Iranian-backed proxy activity in Syria.

## **New Leadership of Department of Defense and Global Coalition against Islamic State**

On December 20, 2018, Secretary of Defense James Mattis resigned. His last day in office was December 31. Deputy Secretary of Defense Patrick Shanahan assumed the position of acting Secretary of Defense on January 1, 2019. On December 21, 2018, the U.S. Special Envoy to the Global Coalition against Islamic State, Brett McGurk, resigned. The Department of State appointed James Jeffrey, the United States Special Representative for Syria Engagement, to serve concurrently as the Special Envoy in January 2019.<sup>11</sup>

## **EVENTS IN SYRIA**

### **SECURITY**

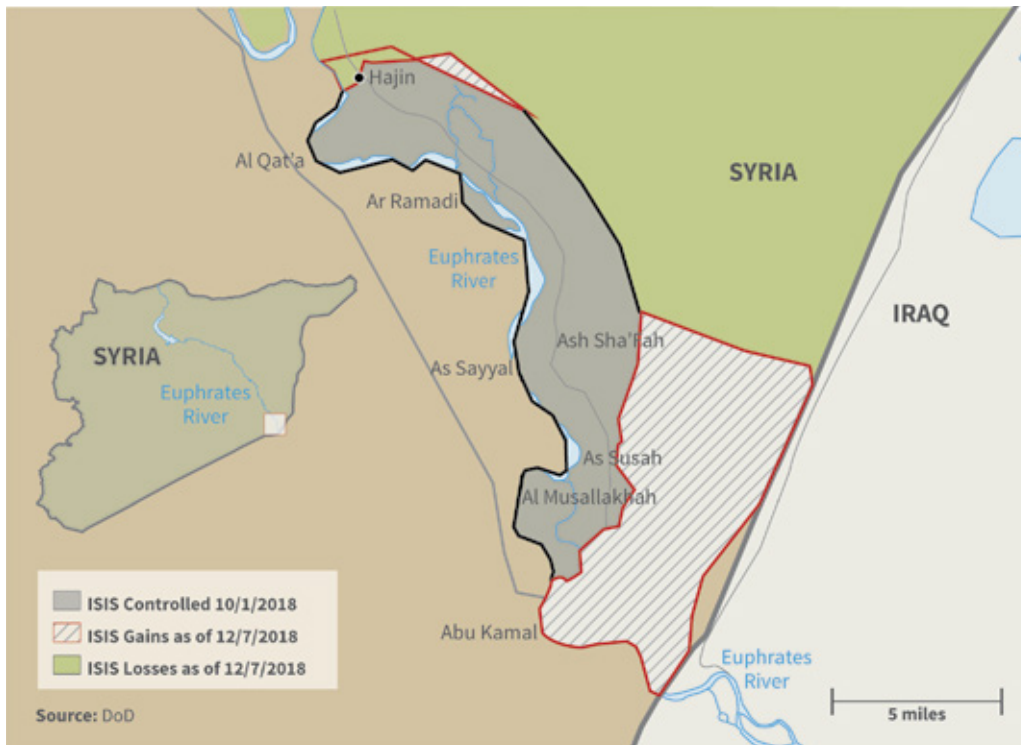
#### **The SDF Takes ISIS’s Last Urban Stronghold**

In December, the SDF captured Hajin, located in the MERV, after weeks of heavy fighting against ISIS.<sup>12</sup> Prior to capturing the SDF’s capture of the town, ISIS staged a counter-offensive that successfully penetrated the SDF’s defensive line and resulted in ISIS capturing territory the SDF had previously gained, CJTF-OIR reported.<sup>13</sup> According to CJTF-OIR, ISIS took advantage of cloudy weather, which impeded the Coalition’s ability to provide intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance (ISR) and other air assets normally provided to the SDF.<sup>14</sup>

Additionally, from October 31 to December 3, the SDF maintained only defensive positions in the MERV, CJTF-OIR reported.<sup>15</sup> According to a DoD press release, the SDF announced on October 31 that it would suspend offensive operations against ISIS as a result of Turkish shelling of SDF positions in Kurdish areas of northeastern Syria.<sup>16</sup> Throughout the SDF’s suspension of offensive operations, CJTF-OIR reported that Coalition air and artillery strikes “suppressed ISIS and degraded their capabilities.”<sup>17</sup> CJTF-OIR also reported that the SDF continued to repel ISIS attacks against their defensive line.<sup>18</sup> For more on the SDF’s suspension of offensive operations against ISIS this quarter, see page 26.

In addition to Hajin, ISIS lost other territory to the SDF in the MERV this quarter.<sup>19</sup> As of the end of the quarter, ISIS remained in control only of villages around Hajin located along

Figure 1.

**ISIS Territorial Gains and Losses in the MERV, as of December 7, 2018.**

the Euphrates River near the Iraqi border. For an overview of territory gained and lost in this area of eastern Syria as of December 7, 2018, see Figure 1.

**DoD: ISIS is Becoming a De-centralized Insurgency in Syria**

CJTF-OIR reported to the DoD OIG that in preparation for the complete loss of territory, ISIS increasingly functions as a decentralized insurgency as its “way ahead plan.”<sup>20</sup> CJTF-OIR said that ISIS fighters use both small arms and heavy weapons, and remained able to plant bombs and carry out assassinations throughout Syria.<sup>21</sup> CJTF-OIR also said that ISIS leadership retains “excellent command and control capability” in Syria.<sup>22</sup>

CJTF-OIR reported to the DoD OIG in December 2018 that ISIS’s morale was “high, fueled by religious fervor,” and that its fighters seemed “unfazed by Coalition airstrikes.” CJTF-OIR stated that the combatants remaining in the MERV were “the most battle hardened and ideologically driven fighters” who will “fight to the last before ceding the last physical remnants of the Caliphate.”<sup>23</sup> On January 24, 2019, CJTF-OIR reported that ISIS’s morale was “trending downward.”<sup>24</sup>

This quarter, CJTF-OIR reported, ISIS was able to effectively coordinate military offensives and counter-offensives, establish “well-founded defensive positions,” and plant a significant number of explosives in their remaining territory in the MERV.<sup>25</sup> CJTF-OIR reported that

**Despite the loss of most of its territory in Syria, DoD officials estimated that ISIS continues to attract foreign fighters to Syria and Iraq. CJTF-OIR reported to the DoD OIG that the actual number is unknown but estimated that it is “most likely 50 per month.”**

ISIS staged counter-offensives during periods of poor weather knowing that decreased visibility would hinder the ISR and close air support that the Coalition provides to the SDF.<sup>26</sup> CJTF-OIR said that ISIS can carry out these offensives quickly and “sometimes with the element of surprise,” but are, on occasion, ineffective when faced by Coalition airpower.<sup>27</sup>

In July 2018, CJTF-OIR reported to the DoD OIG that it estimated “ISIS manpower” at between 15,500 and 17,100 in Iraq and between 13,100 and 14,500 in Syria.<sup>28</sup> However, CJTF-OIR also reported in July that they had “low confidence” in the accuracy of those numbers.<sup>29</sup> At the same time, a United Nations monitoring committee estimated in July that ISIS membership in Iraq and Syria was between 20,000 and 30,000 individuals, divided roughly equally between both countries.<sup>30</sup>

This quarter, the DoD OIG did not receive an unclassified estimate of the total number of ISIS fighters in Iraq and Syria, and the most recent numbers are discussed in the classified appendix. Speaking to reporters in October 2018, General Joseph Dunford said he did not have “a lot of confidence in numbers that are being bounced around” regarding estimates of ISIS fighters.<sup>31</sup> However, CJTF-OIR reported to the DoD OIG in January 2019 that approximately 2,000 ISIS fighters remained in the MERV this quarter.<sup>32</sup>

Despite the loss of most of its territory in Syria, DoD officials stated that ISIS continues to attract foreign fighters to Syria and Iraq. CJTF-OIR reported to the DoD OIG that the actual number is unknown but estimated that it is “most likely 50 per month.”<sup>33</sup>

ISIS’s loss of territory has put increased pressure on its leadership, who have fewer places to hide, according to media reports. As a result, more high profile ISIS members have been captured or killed in recent months, although the senior-most members of the group have continued to elude death or capture.<sup>34</sup>

This quarter, ISIS launched a new report of its own military activities similar to the annual reports that ISIS’s precursor released after the United States withdrew from Iraq in 2011.<sup>35</sup> Independent analysts said that this new publication indicated that ISIS has at least some central planning and ability to track and record its own activity.<sup>36</sup> However, ISIS media production has been reduced by about 83 percent from 2016-2017, DoD officials told the media.<sup>37</sup> Additionally, ISIS’s organizational challenges, such as disagreements over hierarchy and positions between the Iraqi and Syrian fighters, helped accelerate its defeat in Hajin, according to media reports.<sup>38</sup> The classified appendix further discusses ISIS military and insurgent capabilities.

## **ISIS Sustains Operations through Extortion and Donations, among Other Sources**

OUSD(P)/CN/GT reported to the DoD OIG that ISIS still generates revenue in Syria from limited oil smuggling operations, extortion and taxation, criminal activities, kidnapping for ransom, drug trafficking and other illicit trafficking activities. It also receives money through external donations, and continues to draw upon its cash reserves.<sup>39</sup> While the bulk of ISIS financial and military resources is generated in Iraq and Syria, according to OUSD(P)/CN/GT, ISIS branches worldwide contribute varying degrees of support to the ISIS leadership in Syria.<sup>40</sup>

RAND Corporation analysts stated that ISIS continued to extort money from both individuals and construction companies seeking to rebuild destroyed infrastructure. The analysts warned that ISIS could insert operatives into the reconstruction effort to siphon off money.<sup>41</sup> ISIS also continued to extort by taking hostages, shipping drugs and stealing medical supplies, and setting up businesses to launder money, according to independent analysts.<sup>42</sup>

OUSD(P)/CN/GT reported to the DoD OIG that the United States continues to work with the Counter-ISIS Finance Group and Financial Action Task Force to identify and reduce sources of ISIS revenue generation.<sup>43</sup> OUSD(P)/CN/GT reported that fusing intelligence and military operations has led to a “dramatic decrease” in ISIS’s ability to generate revenue and fund its operations.<sup>44</sup> Moreover, according to OUSD(P)/CN/GT, Coalition airstrikes have cut off key communications hubs and transit routes, as well oil and gas production facilities and cash storage sites.<sup>45</sup> OUSD(P)/CN/GT said that as the Coalition moves into the final phase of operations to clear ISIS from the territory it controls in eastern Syria, those efforts will help reduce ISIS revenue.<sup>46</sup>

It was unclear as of the end of the quarter how the U.S. troop withdrawal would affect efforts to reduce ISIS revenue generation. However, in January CJTF-OIR reported that efforts to defeat ISIS and deny their ability to generate revenue “will continue through the withdrawal.” OUSD(P)/ISA reported that the objective of reducing ISIS revenue had not changed.<sup>47</sup>

## **ISIS Remains in Parts of Syria that Fall outside the Coalition’s Areas of Operation**

According to independent analysts, as of December 2018, ISIS remained in pockets of Syria that are outside of the Coalition’s area of operations. The Coalition operates in northeastern Syria and a 55-kilometer area surrounding the At Tanf garrison in southeastern Syria. ISIS maintains a presence in opposition-held Idlib province, areas south of Damascus, and in the Badiyah Desert near the At Tanf garrison.<sup>48</sup> OUSD(P)/ISA reported to the DoD OIG in December that reaching a political solution to the Syrian Civil War under United Nations Security Council Resolution 2254 “will be critical in addressing the ISIS threat across all of Syria.”<sup>49</sup> The classified appendix further discusses ISIS activity outside the Coalition’s areas of operation.

## **DoD: SDF Unable to Conduct Offensive Operations against ISIS without Coalition Support**

In its response to the DoD OIG in December, CJTF-OIR described the SDF as heavily reliant on Coalition air support for protection and to enable offensive operations against ISIS.<sup>50</sup> Specifically, CJTF-OIR reported that a “failure to provide Coalition air power [to the SDF] would result in the SDF [being] unable to conduct meaningful offensive operations” against ISIS.<sup>51</sup>

CJTF-OIR told the DoD OIG that Coalition support was “vital to the SDF’s ability to defeat ISIS” in the MERV.<sup>52</sup> CJTF-OIR described Coalition support to the SDF—both “physically in the form of close air support and indirect fire,” and “mentally” in the form of advice and assistance—as a “significant force multiplier.”<sup>53</sup>



**SDF soldiers gather for breakfast at a battle position in Dayr az Zawr province, Syria. (U.S. Army photo)**

CJTF-OIR also told the DoD OIG that Coalition air assets “play a pivotal role in protecting the SDF, by defeating or preventing enemy counterattacks, reducing ISIS mobility, and conducting maneuvers.”<sup>54</sup> CJTF-OIR said that Coalition air support provides the “offset” necessary for the SDF to have greater freedom to maneuver around the battlefield.<sup>55</sup> Moreover, Coalition air assets contribute to “disrupting and destroying ISIS” by striking “vital ISIS facilities and fighters.”<sup>56</sup>

On occasion, CJTF-OIR said, the mere presence of Coalition air support in the vicinity halted ISIS attacks.<sup>57</sup> CJTF-OIR said that Coalition ISR assets are key to the fight against ISIS as well, by identifying command and control nodes, pre-attack staging areas, convoys, ISIS fighters, ammunition storage sites, avenues of approach, and bomb-making facilities.<sup>58</sup>

Moreover, CJTF-OIR reported to the DoD OIG in December that Syrian Arab Coalition (SAC) fighters are “probably unable to conduct offensive operations against ISIS without the YPG.”<sup>59</sup> The SAC is composed mainly of Arab fighters who are allied with the Kurdish YPG and several smaller militias to form the SDF, which OUSD(P)/ISA described as a multi-ethnic force comprised of Kurds, Arabs, and other ethnic groups.<sup>60</sup> The classified appendix further discusses the SDF.

### **Foreign ISIS Fighters Remain Detained by SDF**

As U.S. troops prepared to withdraw from Syria in January, the fate of foreign ISIS fighters and their families detained by the SDF remained unclear. According to OUSD(P)/ISA, the SDF has captured about 800 foreign ISIS fighters.<sup>61</sup> The SDF claims to have 400 to 500 women and more than 1,000 children associated with the foreign ISIS fighters in their custody.<sup>62</sup> An SDF spokesman said in October that an international tribunal should be set up to try foreign ISIS fighters.<sup>63</sup>

Near the end of the quarter, news sources reported that SDF officials warned that with the withdrawal of U.S. forces, it is possible that the group will release 3,200 ISIS fighters, both local and foreign fighters, currently held prisoner.<sup>64</sup>

OUSD(P)/ISA reported to the DoD OIG in January 2019 that the possible release of the ISIS fighters has accelerated U.S. Government efforts to assist in repatriation of foreign ISIS fighters to their home countries and to identify potential alternatives for long-term detention of those who cannot be repatriated.<sup>65</sup> OUSD(P)/ISA said that progress in returning the fighters home for prosecution has been difficult due to political concerns about bringing hardened ISIS members home and the challenges of gathering sufficient legal evidence to support prosecutions once they have returned.<sup>66</sup> In January, National Security Adviser John Bolton said that the United States was continuing to seek a “satisfactory disposition” for the ISIS prisoners being held by the SDF, according to news reports.<sup>67</sup> The classified appendix further discusses foreign ISIS fighters in Syria.

## Iraqi Forces Provided Cross-border Military Support to the SDF in Syria

CJTF-OIR reported to the DoD OIG in December 2018 that the ISF provided indirect cross-border fire into Syria this quarter and that the Iraqi Air Force struck two buildings in Syria near Hajin.<sup>68</sup> The ISF operated from a base at al Qaim on the Iraqi side of the border to conduct cross-border air and ground support operations against ISIS positions in Syria.<sup>69</sup> Additionally, Iraqi forces remain arrayed along the border and have responded to ISIS attacks with small arms, mortars, artillery, and other military assets.<sup>70</sup>

The ISF’s cross-border air and ground support to the SDF is a by-product of its mission to defend Iraqi sovereignty, CJTF-OIR reported.<sup>71</sup> CJTF-OIR said that the ISF efforts initially involved meetings with the SDF to de-conflict positions and confirm procedures to avoid fratricide. However, after the SDF lost terrain in the MERV due to ISIS counterattacks, the ISF reinforced the Iraq-Syria border.<sup>72</sup>

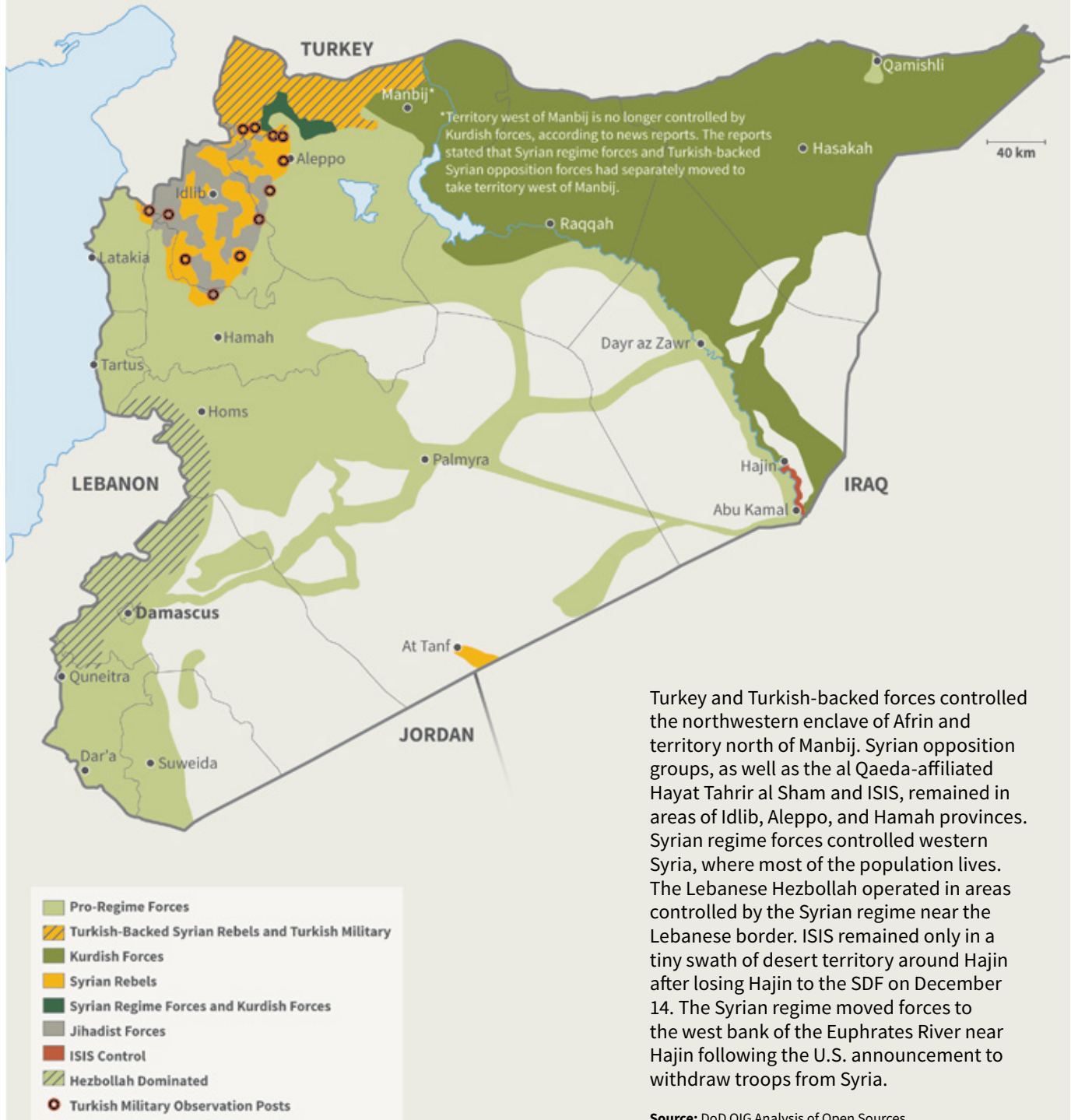
According to news reports, Iraqi shelling into Syria in October killed two ISIS leaders near a town on the Iraqi border.<sup>73</sup> In November, Iraqi artillery shelled ISIS positions in Syria from positions in the Iraqi part of the Jazeera desert, media reports said.<sup>74</sup> Additionally, the Iraqi air force killed at least 40 people in air strikes in eastern Syria, according to news reports.<sup>75</sup> In total, Iraqi commanders claimed to have killed at least 84 ISIS fighters in at least 4 cross-border strikes during the quarter, the news reports said.<sup>76</sup>

CJTF-OIR reported that the U.S. military provides support to the ISF in these cross-border operations from a combined fire base established on November 8. The base enables both the Coalition and the ISF to launch hundreds of strikes against ISIS in Syria.<sup>77</sup> The Coalition has also provided radar coverage for the ISF and Coalition forces, enabling counterbattery fire.<sup>78</sup> The Iraqi unit headquartered near al Qaim supports the SDF with cross-border casualty evacuations, artillery support, and interdiction of ISIS forces attempting to cross the border.<sup>79</sup>

It is unclear whether and what U.S. and ISF cross-border activities will continue after the U.S. troop withdrawal from Syria. However, this quarter the Syrian regime authorized the ISF to use Iraqi aircraft to carry out strikes on ISIS targets in Syria without waiting for permission from Damascus, according to news reports.<sup>80</sup>

**It is unclear whether and what U.S. and ISF cross-border activities will continue after the U.S. troop withdrawal from Syria. However, this quarter the Syrian regime authorized the ISF to use Iraqi aircraft to carry out strikes on ISIS targets in Syria without waiting for permission from Damascus, according to news reports**

# STATUS OF TERRITORIAL CONTROL IN SYRIA AS OF 12/31/2018



Turkey and Turkish-backed forces controlled the northwestern enclave of Afrin and territory north of Manbij. Syrian opposition groups, as well as the al Qaeda-affiliated Hayat Tahrir al Sham and ISIS, remained in areas of Idlib, Aleppo, and Hamah provinces. Syrian regime forces controlled western Syria, where most of the population lives. The Lebanese Hezbollah operated in areas controlled by the Syrian regime near the Lebanese border. ISIS remained only in a tiny swath of desert territory around Hajin after losing Hajin to the SDF on December 14. The Syrian regime moved forces to the west bank of the Euphrates River near Hajin following the U.S. announcement to withdraw troops from Syria.

Source: DoD OIG Analysis of Open Sources

## Turkey Threatens SDF in Northeastern Syria

Turkey launched military operations against SDF positions in northeastern Syria this quarter, according to media reports. In one report published on October 31, 2018, Turkish forces shelled a Kurdish area of northern Syria, killing four YPG fighters.<sup>81</sup> According to a DoD press release, as a result, the SDF announced on October 31 that it would temporarily suspend offensive operations against ISIS in the MERV, approximately 230 miles south of the threatened SDF positions.<sup>82</sup> The next day, Turkish forces amassed near the border and threatened to invade Kurdish-controlled areas of northeastern Syria, according to news reports.<sup>83</sup>

The suspension in fighting was the second time that the SDF temporarily halted offensive operations against ISIS in the MERV following Turkish attacks on Kurdish enclaves in northern Syria. The first suspension occurred in early 2018 when Turkish forces invaded the Kurdish enclave of Afrin in northwestern Syria.<sup>84</sup> At the time, U.S. military officials said that the suspension in fighting had limited the ability of the SDF to launch offensives against ISIS.<sup>85</sup> This time, CJTF-OIR said that the pause in offensive operations had allowed ISIS to consolidate its positions in the MERV.<sup>86</sup>

CJTF-OIR reported to the DoD OIG that the SDF ceased offensive operations during the suspension, but continued to repel ISIS attacks against defensive lines during this period.<sup>87</sup> CJTF-OIR reported that the SDF resumed offensive operations against ISIS in early December and that the SDF was planning an offensive operation against ISIS at the end of the quarter.<sup>88</sup>



**Marine Corps Gen. Joe Dunford, chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, speaks with Turkish national security adviser Ibrahim Kalin at the Presidential Complex in Ankara, Turkey. (DoD Photo)**



Turkey views the YPG as an extension of the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK), which has been waging a violent insurgency in eastern Turkey for decades. Turkey labels the YPG as terrorists and has vowed to remove them from Syria's northern border with Turkey, according to news reports.<sup>89</sup>

The United States also views the PKK as a terrorist group. However, DoD officials do not agree that the YPG is an extension of the PKK. Speaking to reporters in November, Secretary of Defense James Mattis said: "[The Turks] don't like our relationship, and I understand where they're coming from. But we do not say that YPG is the same as PKK."<sup>90</sup>

CJTF-OIR reported to the DoD OIG in December 2018 that "the Kurdish YPG represent the most experienced, well-armed, and most capable portion of the SDF. Their experience in fighting ISIS, along with U.S. equipment and training divested to the SDF over a number of years, is paramount to stability" and to efforts to fight ISIS in the MERV.<sup>91</sup>

Following the Administration's December 2018 announcement of an impending U.S. troop withdrawal, Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan continued to threaten to invade northeastern Syria. The Administration called on Turkey to refrain from attacking Kurdish positions.<sup>92</sup>

The United States has undertaken steps to keep the SDF focused on the fight against ISIS.<sup>93</sup> The first instance occurred last June, when the United States and Turkey agreed to a framework known as the "Manbij Roadmap." Under the terms of the roadmap, the United States and Turkey agreed to conduct joint military patrols west of Manbij along a demarcation line that separates territory held by Turkish-backed Syrian opposition forces from areas under the control of the Manbij Military Council, which media reports have described as "YPG-friendly."<sup>94</sup>

CJTF-OIR and USCENTCOM reported to the DoD OIG that joint U.S.-Turkish patrols along the demarcation line occurred five times this quarter.<sup>95</sup> U.S. officials said the agreement on Manbij was intended to resolve tensions and maintain security around Manbij.<sup>96</sup>

A second instance of steps taken to ensure that the SDF continued to fight ISIS occurred in November 2018 when the U.S. military announced plans to set up military observation posts in Syria along the Turkish border.<sup>97</sup> OUSD(P)/ISA reported to the DoD OIG that the posts were necessary to provide visibility into activities on the border with the intent of reassuring Turkey and preventing ISIS fighters from fleeing Syria across the border into Turkey.<sup>98</sup>

Secretary Mattis described both endeavors as designed to "make sure that the people we have fighting down in the MERV are not drawn off that fight"—a reference to the SDF suspension of offensive operations against ISIS around Hajin, which occurred just before the United States announced plans to erect observation posts.<sup>99</sup> Secretary Mattis also said that the SDF had been "distracted by the instability" around Afrin and Manbij and as a result "were not staying fully focused" on ISIS.<sup>100</sup>

As U.S. forces prepared to withdraw from Syria, it remained unclear what would occur with the Manbij agreement or the observation posts. Turkey has demanded that the U.S. remove the posts, which it regards as giving cover to Kurdish fighters.<sup>101</sup> The classified appendix further discusses Turkey's actions in Syria.

## Opposing Forces Move toward Manbij

In December, according to media reports, Turkish-backed Syrian fighters said they were preparing to move into northeastern Syria, accompanied by Turkish troops, after the U.S. forces leave.<sup>102</sup> Pro-Turkish Syrian militia leaders said that 15,000 Turkish-backed Syrian forces had massed heavy weapons and armored vehicles on the front line of Manbij ahead of their planned incursion into the Kurdish-held areas.<sup>103</sup>

At the same time in December, Syrian regime forces also moved just outside Manbij, according to media reports.<sup>104</sup> The Syrian regime arrived on the frontline between Turkish-backed opposition forces and Kurds in response to a plea from Kurds under threat of a possible Turkish attack, according to media reports.<sup>105</sup>

The Syrian regime has repeatedly declared its intention to reassert control over all of Syria. The moves for control of territory in northern Syria risk conflict with Turkey, independent analysis said.<sup>106</sup> Turkey-backed Syrian forces said they would not accept the return of government forces into Manbij and other areas of northern Syria, according to media reports.<sup>107</sup>

For an overview of territory held by forces operating in Syria, see page 25.

## ISIS Breached De-confliction Zone around U.S. Outpost

ISIS continued to operate in territory around At Tanf, a desert garrison occupied by U.S. troops in southeastern Syria near the Jordanian and Iraqi borders. According to CJTF-OIR, U.S.-backed forces called the Mughawir al Thawra (MaT) stationed at the garrison killed 9 ISIS fighters on November 16 after the fighters had breached a 55-kilometer “de-confliction” zone that surrounds the desert outpost.<sup>108</sup> CJTF-OIR reported to the DoD OIG in July that the MaT is a 300-strong U.S.-backed opposition group stationed in the 55-kilometer de-confliction zone. The MaT receives Coalition support, including lethal and non-lethal support and stipends.<sup>109</sup> CJTF-OIR reported to the DoD OIG that it continued this quarter to advise and provide materiel support to the MaT. CJTF-OIR also reported that the MaT were able to maintain stability within the de-confliction zone and to execute operations against ISIS. CJTF-OIR said that the MaT have become increasingly professional and capable and has demonstrated an ability to influence and improve the battlespace within the de-confliction zone via unilateral patrols. CJTF-OIR said that the patrols have been “very effective” in impeding ISIS movement and supply routes through the region.<sup>110</sup>

U.S. officials reiterated this quarter that the main purpose of the garrison has been to provide a base for confronting ISIS fighters in the area. However, General Joseph Votel, commander of USCENTCOM, said that the outpost serves the secondary purpose of countering Iranian influence in the area. During a visit to the garrison this quarter, General Votel said: “We don’t have a counter Iranian mission here. We have a defeat ISIS mission. But I do recognize that our presence, our developments of partners and relationships down here does have an indirect effect on some malign activities that Iran and their various proxies and surrogates would like to pursue.”<sup>111</sup> In January, National Security Adviser John Bolton said that U.S. troops would remain at the garrison to counter Iranian activity, according to news reports.<sup>112</sup>



**Pro-Turkish Syrian militia leaders said that 15,000 Turkish-backed Syrian forces had massed heavy weapons and armored vehicles on the front line of Manbij ahead of their planned incursion into the Kurdish-held areas.**

## DoD: Russia is a Destabilizing Force in Syria

OUSD(P)/ISA reported to the DoD OIG in December 2018 that Russia continues to act as a destabilizing force within Syria by supporting the Syrian regime, circulating misinformation, and partnering with Iran.<sup>113</sup>

OUSD(P)/ISA reported that Russia continues to support the Syrian regime's military operations against ISIS and opposition elements, particularly in Idlib province and in areas of the Suweida desert and elsewhere in the southwest of the country.<sup>114</sup> This quarter, Russia deployed ground forces and provided air support north of Suweida.<sup>115</sup>

CJTF-OIR reported to the DoD OIG that Russia continued to “de-conflict” its operations in Syria with U.S. forces also operating in Syria.<sup>116</sup>

The classified appendix further discusses Russian activity in Syria.

## Iran Strikes ISIS in Syria

Iranian forces deployed ballistic missiles against ISIS fighters in Syria this quarter.<sup>117</sup> In media reports, Iranian officials said the missile attack was launched in response to an earlier ISIS attack in Iran.<sup>118</sup>

OUSD(P)/ISA reported to the DoD OIG that no Coalition forces were in danger, but that the Iranian forces did not give the U.S. military notice prior to launching the attack.<sup>119</sup>

USCENTCOM reported to the DoD OIG that it had no information on whether Iranian or Iranian-backed forces operating in Syria had engaged ISIS this quarter.<sup>120</sup> OUSD(P)/ISA also stated that U.S. sanctions re-imposed on Iran in August and November 2018 have had limited effect on Iran's ability to operate in Syria. However, OUSD(P)/ISA said that Treasury designations imposed in late November against an illicit Russia-Iran oil transfer network in Syria could have an effect on the Iranian regime's funding of terrorist organizations, including Hezbollah's activity in Syria.<sup>121</sup> The classified appendix further discusses Iranian and Iranian-backed proxy forces activity in Syria.

**Security in Iraq remained divided between improvements in major urban areas and setbacks in rural parts of the country attributed to ISIS's continued activity there.**

## EVENTS IN IRAQ

### SECURITY

#### Urban Security Improves While ISIS Targets Rural Areas

Security in Iraq remained divided between improvements in major urban areas and setbacks in rural parts of the country attributed to ISIS's continued activity there. For the third quarter in a row, CJTF-OIR reported slight increases in ISIS activity in Kirkuk, Diyala, and Salah ad Din provinces.<sup>122</sup> CJTF-OIR also reported increases in ISIS activity in Dahuk, Erbil, Anbar, Ninewah, and Baghdad provinces.<sup>123</sup> According to CJTF-OIR, ISIS maintains pockets of popular support throughout Iraq, and uses tactics including improvised explosive devices (IED) and assassinations to target the Iraqi government, as well as robbery and money laundering to generate revenue.<sup>124</sup>

# ISIS-INITIATED ATTACKS IN IRAQ THIS QUARTER

**1** | 10/6/2018  
Bombing in Fallujah, wounding 5.

**2** | 10/6/2018  
Bombing outside Beiji refinery, Salah-ad-Din province, killing 1 and wounding 11.

**3** | 10/11/2018  
Attack on military convoy near al Qaim, Anbar province, killing 1 officer and kidnapping 3 soldiers.

**4** | 10/11/2018  
Attack on Akkas gas field in western Anbar province, killing 10 ISF personnel.

**5** | 10/23/2018  
Bombing in Qayyara, Ninewah province, killing 6 and wounding 30.

**6** | 10/30/2018  
Bombing targeting pilgrims in Khanaqin, Diyala province, killing 3.

**7** | 11/3/2018  
ISIS assassinates three Muhktars (village leaders) in Kirkuk province. Mahmudiya, Hanutiya, and Jassemiya, all near Hawija.

**8** | 11/4/2018  
Double bombing in Baghdad, killing 4 and wounding 20.

**9** | 11/8/2018  
Bombing in Mosul, Ninewah province, killing 5 and wounding 14.

**10** | 11/12/2018  
Assassination of a Sunni Tribal Forces commander and eight visitors in Karma district, Anbar province.

**11** | 11/18/2018  
Bombing in Tikrit, Salah ad Din province that killed 5 and wounded 14.

**12** | 12/25/2018  
Bombing in Tal Afar, Ninewah province, killing 2 and wounding 11.

**Note:** Attacks were either publicly claimed by ISIS or strongly match the signature of ISIS operating patterns and targets.



Sources: See Endnotes on page 81.

ISIS also continued attacks on energy infrastructure and utilities, targeting electricity, water, and oil infrastructure across Diyala, Kirkuk, and Salah ad Din provinces.<sup>125</sup> Coalition officials stated that ISIS has continued to attack infrastructure in an effort to undermine support for the government.<sup>126</sup>

ISIS resumed issuing reports about its own attacks and operations, indicating at least some reconstitution of the group's command and control capabilities, according to media reports.<sup>127</sup>

Other attacks targeted rural villages, killing leaders and intimidating residents.<sup>128</sup> This quarter, CJTF-OIR reported that ISIS primarily remained in areas more comfortable and familiar to the group, such as rough terrain the ISF is unable to patrol or villages with ISIS family members.<sup>129</sup>

As discussed in the previous quarter's Lead IG report, an ongoing problem in combating ISIS's rural operations was the irregular and limited presence of the ISF in rural areas. Villagers in Kirkuk complained that ISIS is able to evade security forces, who only set up checkpoints on major roads, and take several hours to arrive when called to respond to an ISIS attack.<sup>130</sup> This lack of persistent presence discourages cooperation from local civilians and allows ISIS greater freedom of movement.<sup>131</sup>

According to CJTF-OIR, weather played a role in hampering counter-ISIS efforts this quarter, limiting the ability of the Coalition to develop targets and intelligence.<sup>132</sup> ISIS took advantage of poor weather to operate more freely, knowing that ISR and aircraft are more limited when low cloud ceilings exist.<sup>133</sup> Additionally, the ISF canceled multiple clearing operations this quarter due to poor weather conditions that affected the terrain and hampered the movement of ISF vehicles and personnel, CJTF-OIR reported.<sup>134</sup>

In media reports and in responses to the DoD OIG, Iraqi and Coalition officials described ISIS's continuing revenue generation efforts in Iraq. Iraqi intelligence officials told reporters that ISIS is now selling gold and other material reserves in order to finance its attacks.<sup>135</sup> Extortion remains a major source of income for the group, facilitated by ISIS's tactic of gathering personal information on civilians while governing territory, according to media reports.<sup>136</sup> This allows ISIS to build leverage and threaten or extort civilians in areas where the group maintains a presence.<sup>137</sup> Independent analysts also suggested that ISIS would likely seek to extort companies engaged in reconstruction in Iraq, and would also insert operatives into reconstruction entities to divert funds to terrorist activities.<sup>138</sup> OUSD(P)/CN/GT reported that apart from these efforts, ISIS in Iraq gains revenue from limited oil smuggling, taxation, kidnapping for ransom, trafficking of drugs and other illicit materials, external donations, and a range of various other criminal activities.<sup>139</sup>

Iraqi and Coalition counter-ISIS operations targeted both ISIS's hideouts and safe havens in rural areas and senior leaders and financial networks operating in urban centers. CJTF-OIR reported to the DoD OIG that during the quarter, the ISF conducted 77 battalion-size counter-ISIS operations, which resulted in 451 ISIS suspects detained, 120 ISIS suspects killed in action, 30 ISIS suspects wounded in action, and 6,329 IEDs and 18 weapons recovered.<sup>140</sup> ISF casualties in ISIS attacks declined, from 149 personnel killed last quarter to 103 killed this quarter, according to media reports.<sup>141</sup>

**CJTF-OIR reported to the DoD OIG that during the quarter, the ISF conducted 77 battalion-size counter-ISIS operations, which resulted in 451 ISIS suspects detained, 120 ISIS suspects killed in action, 30 ISIS suspects wounded in action, and 6,329 IEDs and 18 weapons recovered.**

Coalition force advisors observe Iraqi Counter Terrorism Service members clearing weapons after completing room clearing drills at the CTS training grounds near Baghdad. (U.S. Army photo)



Despite an overall shift to prioritizing wide area security, Coalition forces continued to advise and assist Iraqi operational commands at the tactical and operational level by providing intelligence analysis, ISR, air and artillery strikes, and assistance developing tactical and operational plans.<sup>142</sup> The Coalition and the ISF conducted a coordinated raid on ISIS's al-Rawi financial network, arresting 10 ISIS financial facilitators in Baghdad and Erbil, according to CJTF-OIR.<sup>143</sup>

While ISIS activity continued, parts of Iraq also showed signs of improved security during the quarter. More than 13 million people participated in the annual Shia Arbaeen pilgrimage to Karbala, which was protected by 30,000 police and soldiers, and 22,000 PMF fighters, according to media reports.<sup>144</sup> An ISIS bombing attack killed three pilgrims in Diyala province, but no other ISIS attacks on the pilgrimage were reported.<sup>145</sup>

Security measures continued to be more relaxed in Baghdad, with the government opening parts of the fortified Green Zone in celebration of the defeat of ISIS, declared last year, according to media reports.<sup>146</sup> ISIS has continued to try to target Baghdad, but has not successfully detonated a major car bomb in the city in more than a year. Security forces foiled 14 bombing attempts in November alone, according to the head of the Iraqi Baghdad Operations Command.<sup>147</sup>

Iraq also resumed rail service between Baghdad and Fallujah, enabling passengers to avoid checkpoints, road accidents, and threats from remaining insurgents along the road.<sup>148</sup> Civilian casualties caused by violence and terrorism tracked by the United Nations continued to decline, with 69 Iraqi civilians killed and 105 injured in October, 41 killed and 73 injured in November, and 32 killed and 32 injured in December.<sup>149</sup> These numbers represent the lowest civilian casualties in Iraq since 2012.<sup>150</sup> OUSD(P)/ISA reported that civilian casualties are at their lowest point since the invasion of Iraq in 2003.<sup>151</sup>

Specific challenges remain to the enduring defeat of ISIS in Iraq, including the group's strength in rural areas, its network of tunnels and safe houses, its ongoing recruitment of

foreign fighters, and its ability to move across the Iraq-Syria border.<sup>152</sup> Non-governmental organizations (NGOs) this quarter described the damage ISIS inflicted on rural Iraqi communities, including sabotaging agricultural infrastructure and destroying crops.<sup>153</sup> This has left rural communities especially reliant on government support to restore agriculture. If the government is unable to provide support, that could leave communities susceptible to ISIS anti-government propaganda or vulnerable to further ISIS extortion and threats, according to NGO groups.

According to media reports and OUSD(P)/ISA, the lack of stability in Sunni areas could over time lead to a resurgence of support for ISIS or other extremist groups.<sup>154</sup>

Finally, as fighting continues between ISIS and the SDF in eastern Syria, ISIS members could also seek to escape the fighting by entering Iraq. In early November, the ISF dispatched two army brigades, about 3,000-5,000 troops each, to the border with Syria, and the PMF also sent 20,000 fighters to patrol the border.<sup>155</sup> Despite these deployments, Prime Minister Abd al Mahdi warned that ISIS fighters were continuing to try to enter Iraq.<sup>156</sup> This threat is likely to increase as the pressure on ISIS in eastern Syria continues.

### **ISIS Exploits Security Gaps between ISF and Peshmerga**

According to public reports and OUSD(P)/ISA, ISIS continued to exploit the security gaps created by the lack of coordination between the ISF and the Kurdish Peshmerga to shelter their forces and launch attacks in the Iraqi Kurdish Region and other parts of northern Iraq.<sup>157</sup> Tensions remained between the ISF and the Peshmerga. Clashes broke out between the two forces in October 2017, after the Kurdish independence referendum.<sup>158</sup>

As a result of the lack of coordination, ISIS forces have been able to operate around the Qara Chokh mountain range in northern Iraq. ISIS fighters traverse a route from south of Mosul through villages to the Qara Chokh area on the border between Ninewah and Erbil, according to media reports.<sup>159</sup>

However, CJTF-OIR reported that no joint operations were conducted by the ISF and Peshmerga this quarter.<sup>160</sup> The forces did de-conflict 25 counter-ISIS strikes and provided mutual situational awareness on 4 operations along the lines of control.<sup>161</sup>

CJTF-OIR also reported that several clearance operations were conducted by the Federal Police in coordination with the Kurdish Peshmerga on the border of Kirkuk province and the Iraqi Kurdistan Region.<sup>162</sup> CJTF-OIR reported that the Coalition is working to establish joint security centers manned by both ISF and Peshmerga personnel to help close the gaps between the two forces, build confidence, enable operations closer to the disputed areas, and avoid escalation of misunderstandings.<sup>163</sup>

There were no reports of clashes between the ISF and Peshmerga this quarter, although CJTF-OIR reported that some PMF elements continued to harass Peshmerga members south of the disputed areas in Kirkuk, Ninewah, and Diyala provinces.<sup>164</sup> The classified appendix further discusses the ISF and Peshmerga.

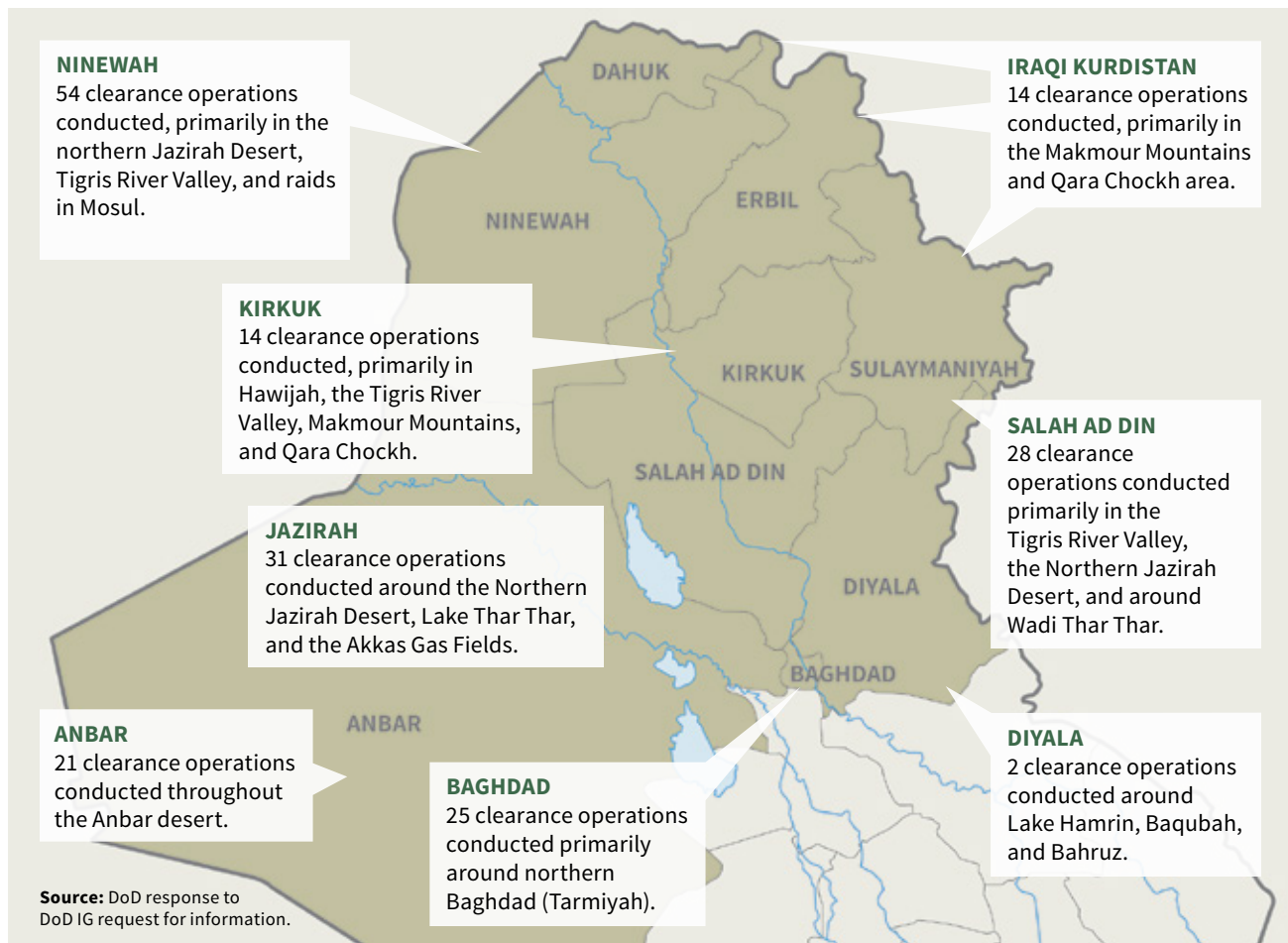
## Coalition Supported ISF Clearance Operations

The ISF continued clearance operations to defeat ISIS efforts in Iraq according to CJTF-OIR. Clearance operations focused on removing weapons, explosives, enemy fighters, and other hazards in liberated areas. These operations involved either stopping and deliberately clearing structures or vehicles, or moving quickly through liberated areas in vehicles to cover more ground.<sup>165</sup> Shorter operations usually lasted about six hours and involved a company of troops clearing a point of interest.<sup>166</sup> Longer operations lasted between a day to several weeks and involved about a battalion of troops with fire support from aircraft or artillery.<sup>167</sup> In these instances, ISF units created a cordon around an area, then conducted a deliberate sweep.<sup>168</sup>

CJTF-OIR reported that the Coalition viewed success of clearance operations through three lenses. The first was the act of conducting the operation itself, as threats, lack of intelligence, or a focus on other missions could make it difficult for the Coalition to influence the ISF to

Figure 2.

### Clearance Operations Conducted in Iraq this Quarter, by Iraqi Operations Commands



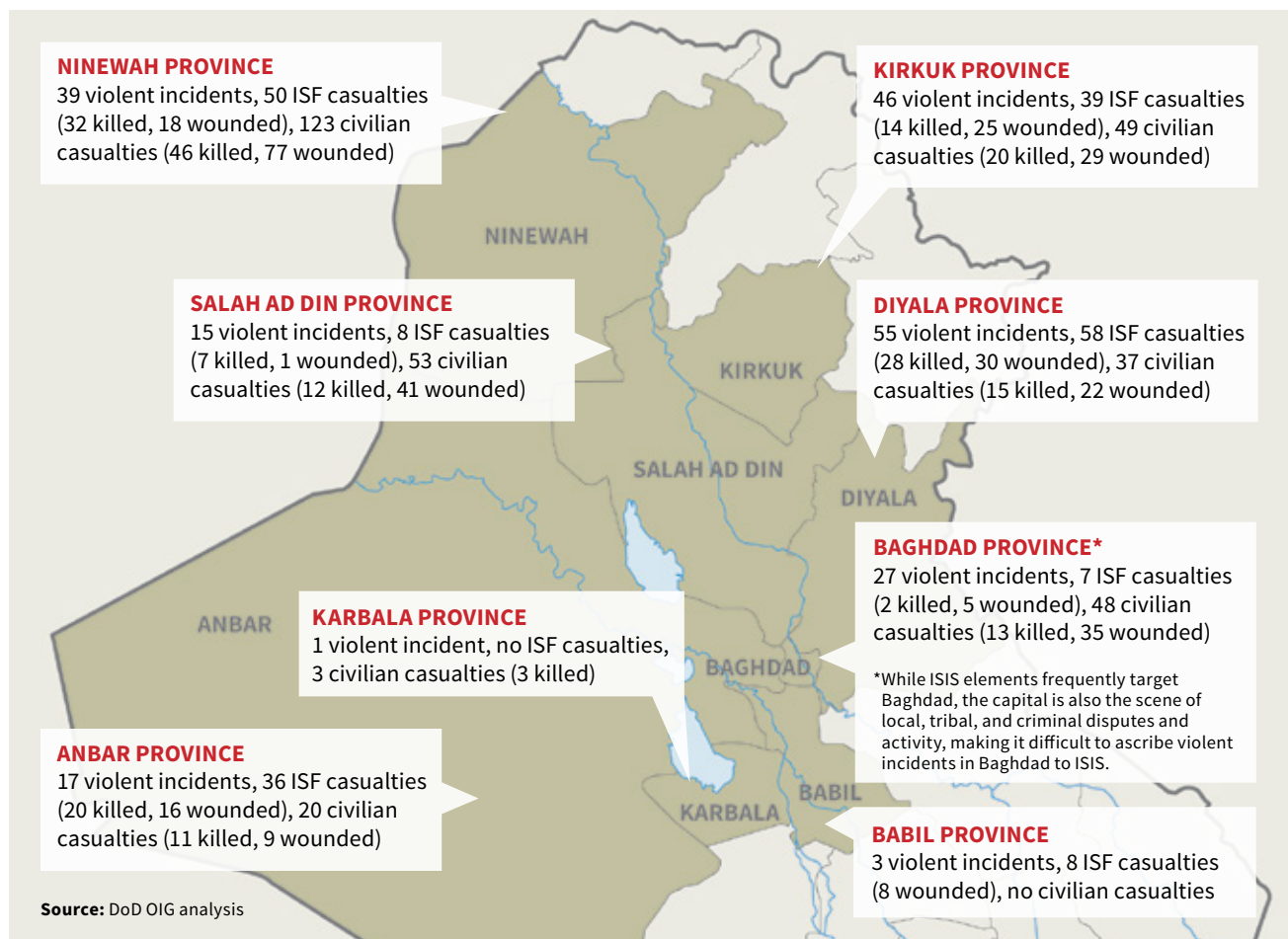


launch an operation in a particular area.<sup>169</sup> The second lens was the level of coordination across operational commands involved in the clearance effort.<sup>170</sup> This coordination helped diminish the ability of ISIS to exploit gaps between operational commands.<sup>171</sup> Finally, the operations were assessed on their effects, such as enemy forces killed or captured, and equipment, weapons, and IEDs captured or destroyed. Operations that resulted in insurgent forces and equipment captured or killed were seen as successful because they helped degrade ISIS forces and equipment, improve ISF morale, and reduce future risks to ISF forces in the cleared areas.<sup>172</sup>

The Coalition provided planning, intelligence, ISR, and fire support to assist clearance operations. Through intelligence and ISR, the Coalition helped the ISF focus clearance efforts, develop targets, and track the progress of operations.<sup>173</sup> Fire support, including close air support and artillery, degraded ISIS forces while motivating the ISF.<sup>174</sup> Finally, the Coalition helped the ISF develop operational plans such as ground maneuvers.<sup>175</sup>

Figure 3.

### Open Source Reports of ISIS Activity in Iraq this Quarter



ISIS has taken advantage of the ISF's limited nighttime operational capabilities to conduct night operations and maneuvers, according to academic researchers.<sup>176</sup> In response to this threat, the Coalition has incorporated night movement tactics into some training efforts.<sup>177</sup> However, due to the lack of night vision optics for weapons systems and personnel in most Iraqi conventional forces, training has not covered night fighting.<sup>178</sup>

## Coalition Forces Primarily Assist With Offensive and Hold Operations

After territory is cleared of a residual ISIS presence, hold forces are needed to consolidate the gains. Last quarter, the DoD OIG released a report on Coalition efforts to support the Iraqi police hold forces in areas liberated from ISIS. One report finding was that Coalition officials made a “deliberate choice” to prioritize Coalition resources on offensive operations rather than hold forces.<sup>179</sup> This quarter, CJTF-OIR reported that the Coalition conducts offensive, defensive, and stabilization operations in Iraq, and that the different types of operation vary by province.<sup>180</sup> While the prioritization of different kinds of operations depended on requirements in the given province, the ISF prioritizes offensive clearance operations when drawing on Coalition resources such as ISR, strikes, and intelligence.<sup>181</sup> In northern Iraq, specifically, operations were aimed at consolidating gains after liberating the area from ISIS, and are primarily hold operations.<sup>182</sup>

The Coalition provided intelligence, fire support from aircraft and artillery, logistics, and training to ISF units performing hold force missions.<sup>183</sup> Along with training in skills and combat capabilities, the Coalition has also provided training in information operations, human rights, and gender issues to help hold force units better gain and maintain popular support from the populace.<sup>184</sup> According to CJTF-OIR, current advise, assist, and enable activities were coaching the ISF to conduct longer clearance operations and to provide additional combat power to ensure that gains were consolidated.<sup>185</sup>

## ISF Lacks Intelligence Gathering and Use Capabilities

Last quarter, CJTF-OIR highlighted problems with the ISF's intelligence gathering and analysis capabilities, reporting that factors like an institutional cultural reluctance to share information and the use of drones to micro-manage ground forces hampered the ISF's collection and use of intelligence.<sup>186</sup> This quarter, CJTF-OIR identified additional challenges to the ISF's intelligence efforts, including the ISR asset tasking system, the lack of sufficient intelligence personnel, and the absence of procedures to either vet intelligence received from human sources or to exploit easily accessible public open sources.

CJTF-OIR reported that the ISF did not have an established and standardized ISR tasking prioritization system, meaning that written requests from ISF units for ISR support could be arbitrarily denied by the Iraqi Air Cell.<sup>187</sup> This limited the ability to task ISR assets to support the different operational commands.<sup>188</sup> When ISR assets were approved for use by an operational command, the intelligence gathered was dedicated to that command, and not shared with other commands or security entities without explicit approval.<sup>189</sup> CJTF-OIR further reported that the ISF could benefit from more processing, exploitation, and dissemination of intelligence gathered by airborne ISR assets; additional training

**CJTF-OIR reported that the ISF did not have an established and standardized ISR tasking prioritization system, meaning that written requests from ISF units for ISR support could be arbitrarily denied by the Iraqi Air Cell.**

on geospatial intelligence to better identify enemy persons and equipment; and a remote streaming capability to allow subordinate levels of the force to view ISR feeds.<sup>190</sup>

Furthermore, CJTF-OIR noted that the ISF lacks personnel in the intelligence section of the Joint Operations Command, which was responsible for receiving intelligence products from across the Iraqi government and distributing them to other operational commands.<sup>191</sup> As a result, there was no fusion of intelligence prior to distribution, which meant that operational units were not receiving fully vetted, analyzed, and focused intelligence to use in conducting operations.<sup>192</sup> According to CJTF-OIR, while Iraqi personnel welcomed intelligence, the ISF did not prioritize it due to an insufficient number of ISF personnel who could be diverted from their regular duties, resulting in minimal intelligence fusion and creation of basic analytical products with Coalition support.<sup>193</sup>

Finally, according to CJTF-OIR, the ISF had no consistent system for vetting and rating over time the reliability of human intelligence it receives, which again means that operational units might not be acting on accurate or priority intelligence.<sup>194</sup> Without this process, the ISF would continue to be unable to track the accuracy and reliability of intelligence or the credibility of a source over time.<sup>195</sup>

At the tactical level, the ISF could start to make up for the lack of other intelligence collection tools through the exploitation of open source information, but need training on open source intelligence exploitation.<sup>196</sup> CJTF-OIR reported that social media exploitation training would help the ISF gather information from easily accessible websites.<sup>197</sup> The ISF lacks significant signals intelligence, and improving their capacity to intercept electronic communications would facilitate efforts to target high value ISIS members in the country.<sup>198</sup> The DoD provided only classified responses describing efforts to improve these shortfalls.<sup>199</sup>

According to CJTF-OIR, the ISF needs institutional changes to streamline the use of ISR assets and internal procedures to rely on its own ISR assets first before asking for Coalition assistance.<sup>200</sup> These changes are unlikely to occur in the near term, and CJTF-OIR stated that there was no estimated timeline to improve the ISF's intelligence collection and fusion capabilities.<sup>201</sup> For the foreseeable future, the ISF would have an "enduring requirement" for signals intelligence and ground monitoring of enemy movements provided by the Coalition, according to CJTF-OIR.<sup>202</sup> However, ISIS's shift from an entity holding territory to an insurgency coupled with the redistribution of ISR platforms to other theaters would lead to increasing intelligence gaps and could make it more difficult for the Coalition to provide intelligence to the ISF, CJTF-OIR said.<sup>203</sup>

### Operation Reliable Partnership Seeks to Address Other ISF Shortfalls

Outside of intelligence, CJTF-OIR reported that other ISF shortfalls existed in the areas of precision strike capabilities, logistical support to operations, organization of different branches of the security forces, self-sustained training, and campaign planning.<sup>204</sup> CJTF-OIR reported that after training 24 ISF units over the course of the quarter, concerns remained about the ISF units' command and control, leadership, physical resilience, and ability to execute basic minor infantry tactics.<sup>205</sup>

**Outside of intelligence, CJTF-OIR reported that other ISF shortfalls existed in the areas of precision strike capabilities, logistical support to operations, organization of different branches of the security forces, self-sustained training, and campaign planning.**

CJTF-OIR reported that the Coalition was working to address these gaps, in conjunction with the Iraqi government and international partners, through Operation Reliable Partnership (ORP).<sup>206</sup> ORP was refreshed during the quarter to better focus on existing capability gaps, but training and institutional development activities continued to take place this quarter.<sup>207</sup> ORP addresses seven security functions: security policy, security operations, intelligence, training, sustainment, counter-terrorism, and aviation.<sup>208</sup> This quarter, working with personnel from the Office for Security Cooperation-Iraq and the NATO Mission in Iraq (NMI), members of the Coalition helped Ministry of Defense personnel to develop Iraqi defense policy for 2019-2021.<sup>209</sup> They also worked with Iraqi police forces to transition from combat and counterinsurgency efforts towards more traditional police functions, according to CJTF-OIR.<sup>210</sup>

Other institutional development efforts under ORP included assisting planners within the Ministries of Defense and Interior with the development of 2019-2020 budgets, instituting NATO logistical codification systems within the Ministry of Defense, and creating up an inter-Ministerial medical committee to coordinate resources, training, and capabilities.<sup>211</sup> CJTF-OIR reported that progress during the quarter was difficult due to the overly centralized decision-making of the ISF, the difficulty in encouraging Iraqis to take ownership of reform plans, and frictions between and within Iraqi security ministries.<sup>212</sup> However, momentum developed in the areas of implementing a national security strategy and in resource management due to increased interest from key leaders within the security ministries.<sup>213</sup>

Another aspect of supporting security sector reform in Iraq was countering corruption within the Iraqi security institutions. No notable Iraqi counter-corruption efforts were observed by DoD personnel.<sup>214</sup> However, USCENTCOM reported that a Defense Institute of International Legal Studies team will conduct a counter-corruption course in Baghdad in February, 2019.<sup>215</sup> The course will include 60 students from the Ministry of Defense, Counter Terrorism Service, and Ministry of Interior, and will cover topics including reporting and prosecuting corruption, transparency in government, and organized crime.<sup>216</sup> Additionally, as part of ORP, the Coalition supported the implementation of a software-based human resources management and pay system in an effort to improve the accounting of military salaries and reduce the potential for corruption.<sup>217</sup>

According to CJTF-OIR, some of the ISF's capability gaps can be addressed within 2 years, while others will require 5 or more years of engagement.<sup>218</sup> This timeline could be extended by the organizational challenges caused by competing and duplicated security institutions, external malign influence, government instability, and a failure to address the root causes of the rise of ISIS.<sup>219</sup> Likewise, the timeline could be shortened by effective security sector reform efforts that clearly delineate the roles and responsibilities of different security forces and incentives that increase Iraqi buy-in.<sup>220</sup> OUSD(P)/ISA stated that key bureaucratic and institutional obstacles also hamper efforts to reform the deeply dysfunctional bureaucracy and to root out corruption.<sup>221</sup> CJTF-OIR reported "persistent Coalition support to [the] ISF must be foreseen."<sup>222</sup> CJTF-OIR further stated "many key ISF leaders have the knowledge and influence to enact reforms that have been encouraged by the international community for years but lack the will to do so through concrete actions."<sup>223</sup> OUSD(P)/ISA reported that the DoD expects that the ISF's security sector reform will need to continue for the foreseeable future.<sup>224</sup> The classified appendix further discusses Operation Reliable Partnership.

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An Iraqi Army Aviation helicopter sets on an air field at Camp Taji, Iraq. (U.S. Army National Guard photo)



**The Iraqi Air Enterprise consists of the Iraqi Air Force, the Iraqi Army Aviation Command, and the Iraqi Air Defense Command.**

## Iraq's Air Enterprise Benefits from Wartime Experience and Personnel Eager to Work with the Coalition

According to CJTF-OIR, efforts to improve the Iraqi Air Enterprise reached several milestones this quarter. The Coalition provided advice, assistance, and enabling to the Iraqi Army Aviation Command in conducting the first joint exercise integrating Iraqi ISR with Coalition ground forces.<sup>225</sup> Coalition personnel also provided support to a joint search and rescue exercise conducted by the Iraqi Air Force, Iraqi Army Aviation Command, and the Iraqi Army.<sup>226</sup> CJTF-OIR reported that command and control functions were improved through training Iraqi ground controllers on ground control intercept skills with F-16 missions.<sup>227</sup> According to CJTF-OIR, other training efforts improved Iraqi C-130 maintenance procedures, assisted with budgeting and management planning, and provided skills to enable Iraqi personnel to train other Iraqis.<sup>228</sup> CJTF-OIR assessed that while the Iraqi Air Enterprise is hindered by rudimentary capabilities and unsustainable operations, maintenance, and logistics processes, it benefited from wartime experience and resourceful personnel who are receptive to Coalition assistance.<sup>229</sup>

Next quarter, according to CJTF-OIR, training efforts will continue to support combat units, improve integration of Army Aviation with the Counter-Terrorism Service and other ground units, improve coordination between F-16 aircraft and ground controllers, and continue to support budgeting, logistics, and management of the Iraqi Air Enterprise.<sup>230</sup>

At the tactical level, CJTF-OIR reported that the Iraqi Air Enterprise needed to reduce its dependency on Coalition logistics support and replace or update outdated and ineffective equipment.<sup>231</sup> Operationally, the lack of information sharing between military commands inhibited the force, hampering communication and tasking.<sup>232</sup> Finally, there were limited budgetary resources to maintain the Iraqi defense establishment, requiring an in-depth evaluation of the costs of current military assets versus their utility for safeguarding the country.<sup>233</sup> CJTF-OIR assessed that “ultimately, the challenges lie with a government structure that is still in flux, a country working to unite, [and] a capable defense structure that has yet to effectively integrate on a consistent bases.”<sup>234</sup>

## ISF Training Focuses on Counterinsurgency Skills

Approximately 13,300 ISF military and police personnel received training from the Coalition this quarter.<sup>235</sup> CJTF-OIR reported that training courses were adapted based on feedback from ISF commanding officers, and that when multiple units requested similar changes, the amendments were reviewed and approved by CJTF-OIR's training director.<sup>236</sup> Current training plans for the Ministries of Defense and Interior were more focused on counterinsurgency skills, although the training concept through to 2020 looks to evolve more to a combined arms focused training.<sup>237</sup> Additionally, CJTF-OIR clarified that the training is of a basic nature and does not correspond to U.S. definitions of counterinsurgency-focused training.<sup>238</sup>

The training structure was planned to evolve from a Coalition lead with ISF support to a partnered structure in 2019, before transitioning to an ISF lead.<sup>239</sup> Plans called for eight training sites including infrastructure and ISF trainers to eventually transition to ISF management.<sup>240</sup> Four sites were currently well developed, and scheduled to reach final operating capability by the end of 2019 or early 2020.<sup>241</sup> The remaining four were working to reach an interim operating capability before being taken over by the ISF.<sup>242</sup> All training facilities should be under ISF management by 2020, although this timeline could change depending on progress at each site.<sup>243</sup>

## NATO to Focus on Institutional Training

The newly established NMI will have a role training Iraqi personnel and developing Iraqi security institutions.<sup>244</sup> The NMI will provide technical advice to personnel within the Ministry of Defense and the Office of the National Security Advisor and training instructors at professional military schools and institutions.<sup>245</sup> The goal of these efforts is to produce

**Iraqi Federal Police force members demonstrate how to perform security during a graduation ceremony at the Besmaya Range Complex, Iraq. (U.S. Army photo)**



**CJTF-OIR described anecdotal reports of abuse against Sunni tribesmen and civilians by the PMF in areas cleared from ISIS.**

a self-sustaining cadre of Iraqi instructors.<sup>246</sup> Specific focuses of the training will include the University of Defense, the Non Commissioned Officer Academy, and specialty schools in the fields of computer science, bomb disposal, armor, military intelligence and security, military electrical and mechanical engineering, transportation, administration and logistics, signals, and military medical skills.<sup>247</sup>

OUSD(P)/ISA reported that the Coalition and NATO coordinated regularly to ensure the complementary nature of their training efforts.<sup>248</sup> The two missions have different emphases, with the NATO mission focused on higher-level institutional development while the Coalition works to develop capabilities at lower echelons.<sup>249</sup> The NMI will not deploy personnel alongside Iraqi forces in combat operations.<sup>250</sup> Like the Coalition, it will only train members of the ISF under the direct control of the Iraqi government.<sup>251</sup>

### **Militias Still Operated Outside of Iraqi Government Control**

OUSD(P)/ISA reported to the DoD OIG that a significant factor affecting Iraq's security sector is the presence and activities of the Popular Mobilization Forces (PMF) and the destabilizing actions of some elements of the PMF that are affiliated with or backed by Iran, and which operate outside the control of the Iraqi security institutions.<sup>252</sup> During a meeting with Iraqi President Barhim Salih this quarter, Iran's Supreme Leader, Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, called on Iraq to preserve the PMF.<sup>253</sup> While the PMF played a significant role in the defeat of ISIS in Iraq, Iran's support to many elements of the PMF has also allowed Iran to maintain influence in Iraq, and the Iraqi government has been unable to assert centralized control over the PMF.<sup>254</sup>

According to media reports, the lack of coordination and even competition between the PMF and the ISF resulted in tensions between the entities and between the PMF and civilians. The PMF, including Shia Arab forces, local Sunni Arabs, and religious minority groups, operate in Anbar, Ninewah, Diyala, Kirkuk, Basrah, Wasit, and Salah ad Din provinces.<sup>255</sup> The presence of both the ISF and PMF has placed additional burdens on civilians, as in many areas the forces control separate checkpoints and require different permits for passage.<sup>256</sup>

OUSD(P)/ISA reported to the DoD OIG that the existence of the PMF was not seen as positively or negatively affecting ongoing security assistance efforts during the quarter.<sup>257</sup> However, CJTF-OIR stated that there has been an increase in reports of violence, abuse, and tension in areas patrolled by the PMF, and that these trends will likely continue as long as the PMF competes with local police or other ISF formations for control of territory and influence.<sup>258</sup> Furthermore, the CJTF-OIR described anecdotal reports of abuse against Sunni tribesmen and civilians by the PMF in areas cleared from ISIS.<sup>259</sup> In media reports, residents of al Qaim, in Anbar province, stated that fear of militia abuses has been a major factor in their delay in returning home.<sup>260</sup> PMF fighters reportedly have also harassed individual members of the Kurdish fighting force, the Peshmerga, in Diyala, Kirkuk, and Ninewah provinces.<sup>261</sup>

OUSD(P)/ISA reported that Coalition visibility into the actions of the PMF is limited because the Coalition does not provide assistance to the PMF.<sup>262</sup> As a result, OUSD(P)/ISA was unable to provide any information about the involvement of PMF units in drug smuggling and other illicit trafficking activities in Iraq.<sup>263</sup>

OUSD(P)/ISA reported to the DoD OIG that no major actions were undertaken by the Iraqi government to disarm, demobilize, or reintegrate the PMF this quarter.<sup>264</sup> However, the parliament and the new Prime Minister did begin to implement plans to pay PMF members at the same rate as ISF personnel.<sup>265</sup> PMF officials told journalists that fighters will be paid on a structured pay plan out of the emergency budget, similar to the Army, Police, and other personnel in the security apparatus, until sustainable funding is secured.<sup>266</sup>

The United States remains concerned about the links many within the PMF have to Iran. Academic researchers have suggested that the government may be able to shift the loyalty of PMF members associated with Iran-backed militias to the Iraqi government through providing salaries to PMF members.<sup>267</sup> Some PMF commanders told journalists that while they appreciate the past support from Iran, they currently receive all funding from the Iraqi government.<sup>268</sup> However, the salaries could result in providing funds to Iran-aligned groups without impacting their loyalties to Iran.

According to OUSD(P)/ISA, uncertainty around the formation of the Iraqi government, specifically due to disagreements about nominees to lead the Defense and Interior ministries, has hindered efforts to resolve the future status of the PMF.<sup>269</sup>

**A primary U.S. concern about the influence of the PMF has been the links many within the PMF have to Iran.**

## Coalition Diverted Resources from ISIS Fight to Track Iranian Activities in Iraq

While USCENTCOM stated that Iranian-backed groups in Iraq did not threaten Coalition personnel or facilities this quarter, USCENTCOM stated that the Iranian presence and provision of aid to Iran-aligned terrorist organizations in Iraq did hamper the counter-ISIS campaign.<sup>270</sup> USCENTCOM said that Iranian activity in Iraq included the delivery of humanitarian aid and “kinetic aid” to “numerous terrorist organizations operating independently from ISIS in Iraq.” That Iranian assistance, USCENTCOM reported, allowed those terrorist organizations to be better positioned and equipped to target Coalition and Iraqi government operations.<sup>271</sup>

USCENTCOM reported that Coalition forces had to dedicate ISR and other aerial assets to “identify and track patterns of behavior” in order to negate or deter Iranian activities. USCENTCOM said that as a result, ISIS was able to reconstitute in areas close to the Iran-Iraq border.<sup>272</sup>

Early in the quarter, Iraqi officials in Basrah suggested that the closure of the U.S. consulate in that city could contribute to instability and increase Iran’s ability to influence the area.<sup>273</sup> While Basrah and activities there affect U.S. interests in Iraq, the operational area of OIR does not extend south to Basrah, and there are no Coalition forces present there.<sup>274</sup> According to media reports, PMF groups with links to Iran have recently increased their involvement in Basrah.<sup>275</sup>

However, an Iraqi public opinion firm published findings this quarter showing that favorable opinion of Iran among Iraqi Shia decreased from 88 percent in 2015 to 47 percent in 2018, while unfavorable opinions increased from 6 percent to 51 percent.<sup>276</sup> There were similar trends in the question of Iran’s reliability as a partner, and Iran’s threat to Iraqi sovereignty.<sup>277</sup>



Iran also conducts other illicit activity in Iraq that undermines security and stability. In Basrah, the police chief accused Iran of being the source of 80 percent of all drugs in the province.<sup>278</sup> Also this quarter, the Treasury Department sanctioned four Iraqi operatives for acting on the behalf of Hezbollah and the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps-Quds Force (IRGC-QF) for activities including smuggling oil, sending fighters around the region, and gathering intelligence.<sup>279</sup> The classified appendix further discusses Iranian activity in Iraq.

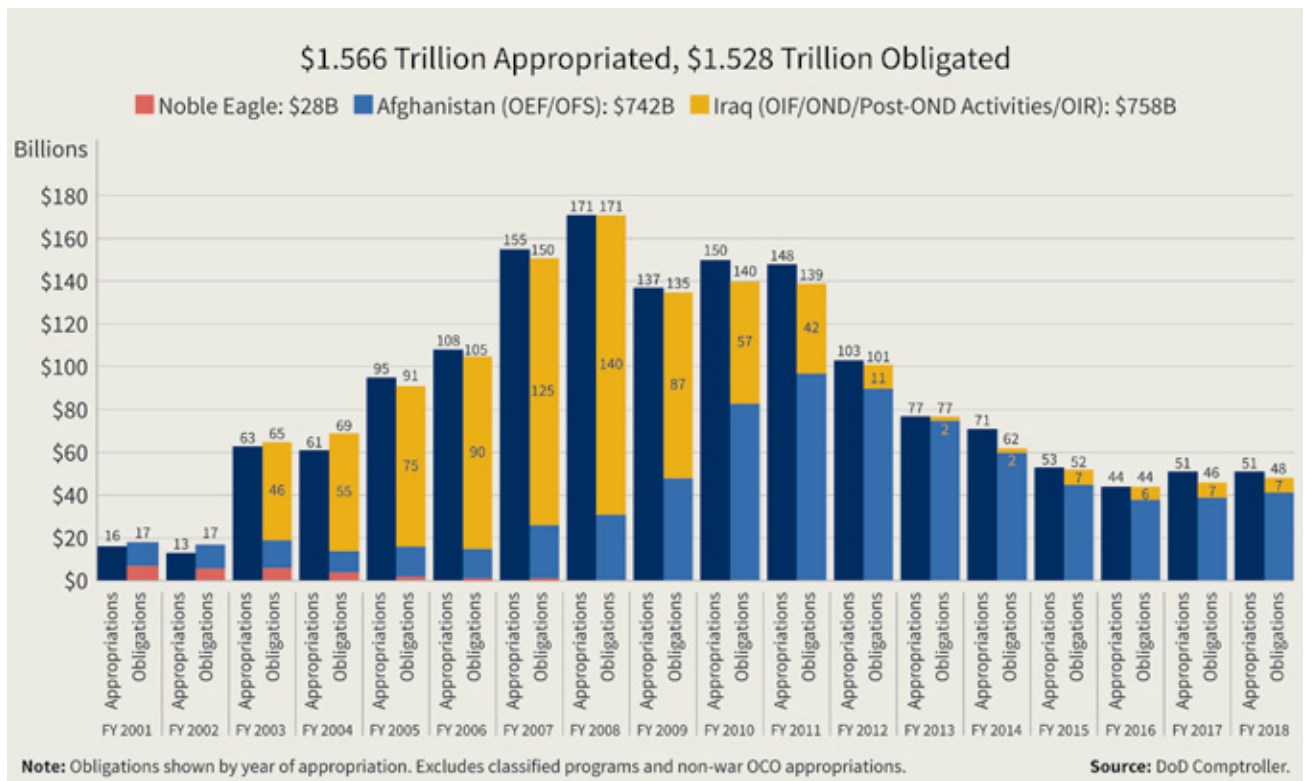
## SUPPORT TO MISSION

### DoD Begins FY 2019 with Full Year Appropriations, DoS and USAID End Quarter with a Shutdown

On September 21 and 28, 2018, the President signed a pair of appropriation bills into law that provided full year FY 2019 funding for some federal departments and agencies, including the DoD. This legislation provided the DoD with a total of \$685.6 billion in FY 2019, which includes \$616.8 billion in base funding and \$68.8 billion in OCO funding.<sup>280</sup> This represents an increase of approximately 2.2 percent from FY 2018’s total DoD appropriation of \$671.1 billion and a 4.4 percent increase in the OCO budget from the FY 2018 appropriation of \$65.9 billion.<sup>281</sup>

Figure 4.

#### Total DoD War-Related Appropriations and Obligations from September 11, 2001 through September 30, 2018



For the first time since FY 2009, the DoD's annual appropriation was enacted before the fiscal year began, and the DoD was able to begin executing its budget immediately without the need for a continuing resolution.<sup>282</sup>

A series of continuing resolutions provided short-term funding for the DoS and USAID for most of this quarter. On December 22, 2018, appropriations for these and several other federal departments and agencies expired, resulting in a partial government shutdown. During the shutdown, essential DoS and USAID personnel were required to report for duty without pay and all other employees were furloughed.<sup>283</sup> The partial government shutdown ended on January 25, 2019.

In December 2018, the DoD Comptroller released the DoD's congressionally-mandated quarterly *Cost of War* report, which details the DoD's spending on overseas contingency operations in Iraq, Syria, and Afghanistan through September 30, 2018. According to this report, the DoD has spent \$1.5 trillion in support of contingency operations since September 11, 2001. The total cost of operations in Iraq over that time (including operations in Syria) was \$759.4 billion, of which \$28.5 billion has been obligated in support of OIR since that operation began in 2014.<sup>284</sup>

The Comptroller reported that the DoD obligated \$8.3 billion for OIR during FY 2018, which was \$100 million less than the amount spent on OIR in FY 2017. Average monthly spending on all OCOs in FY 2018 was reported at \$3.7 billion, of which \$700 million was in support of OIR. According to the DoD Comptroller, these obligations cover all expenses related to the conflicts, including war-related operational costs, support for deployed troops, and transportation of personnel and equipment.<sup>285</sup>

The Counter-ISIS Train and Equip Fund (CTEF) is the principal funding stream used by the DoD to provide training, assistance, and equipment to the ISF, Kurdish Peshmerga, and vetted Syrian opposition fighters against ISIS. Since the program received its initial appropriation in FY 2015 (originally as two separate funds for Iraq and Syria), the DoD has spent approximately \$4.1 billion through this fund. As of this quarter, the DoD obligated \$510.6 million of its \$905.7 million 2-year CTEF allocation for Syria, which included FY 2018 and FY 2017 funds. The largest portion of this was spent on weapons, ammunition, and equipment (\$387.3 million). Other costs included support for vetted Syrian fighters and transportation and staging of weapons and equipment. In FY 2019, the DoD's allocation for CTEF, including FY 2019 and FY 2018 funds, was \$2.8 billion, of which \$1.9 billion was designated for Iraq, \$630 million for Syria, and \$250 million for border security.<sup>286</sup>

## DoS OIG Finds that Personnel Overseeing Contracts in Iraq Lack Required Training and Certification









In November 2018, the DoS OIG issued an audit report on the DoS Bureau of Near Eastern Affairs' process for nominating Contracting Officer's Representatives and Government Technical Monitors in Iraq. These personnel oversee contracts valued at more than \$3.1 billion to ensure that contractors are performing as required under their contracts. For the DoS mission in Iraq, these contracts cover such essential services as medical support, information technology, linguistic services, and life support services, which includes food, water, fuel, waste management, transportation, fire protection, and other necessities for DoS personnel stationed in Iraq.<sup>287</sup>

Under the Federal Acquisition Regulation, Contracting Officers are responsible for negotiating, awarding, administering, modifying, and terminating contracts on behalf of the U.S. Government. Contracting Officers may designate Contracting Officer’s Representatives and Government Technical Monitors to assist them in these responsibilities. These designees usually possess special skills, knowledge, or proximity to the contractor’s work site to help ensure the Contracting Officer that the U.S. Government is receiving high-quality supplies and services in accordance with all contract requirements.<sup>288</sup>

The DoS OIG found that fewer than two-thirds of the Contracting Officer’s Representatives and none of the Government Technical Monitors reviewed in this audit possessed the required level of certification at the time of their nomination for the contracts they would be responsible for overseeing. The audit also found that the Bureau of Near Eastern Affairs did not establish work commitments or seek feedback from Contracting Officers to hold Contracting Officer’s Representatives and Government Technical Monitors accountable for their performance. The Bureau concurred with all 13 of the DoS OIG’s recommendations, including that it nominate only individuals with the necessary technical expertise and certification to serve as Contracting Officer’s Representatives and Government Technical Monitors, and that this information be included in their nomination when it is presented to the Contracting Officer for their approval.<sup>289</sup> For more on this report, see page 51.

Figure 5.

**Qualified and Unqualified DoS Contracting Officer’s Representatives (CORs) and Government by Contract Technical Monitors (GTMs) by Contract**

	Contracting Officer’s Representatives	Government Technical Monitors	Total Funded Contract Value (in millions)
<b>Operations and Maintenance Support Services</b>			\$735.0
<b>Baghdad Life Support Services</b>			\$801.0
<b>Medical Support Services Iraq</b>		None Appointed	\$85.1
<b>IT Support</b>		None Appointed	\$15.4
<b>Linguist Services</b>		None Appointed	\$14.7
<b>Sully Compound (Transitional Housing for U.S. Government Personnel in Iraq)</b>		None Appointed	\$21.3

**Note:** CORs and GTMs who are FAC-COR Level I or II certified and assigned to these contracts are considered unqualified because the dollar amount and complexity of the contracts require a FAC-COR Level III certification. The CO assigned 17 CORs and 14 GTMs to oversee these contracts. DoD personnel assigned as GTMs on the BLISS and OMSS contracts at the Union III Compound are not included in the scope of this audit and therefore are not represented.

**Source:** DoS OIG





An instructor from the Baghdad Fighting School conducts cordon and strike training with Iraqi soldiers at Camp Taji, Iraq. (U.S. Army photo)

# OVERSIGHT ACTIVITIES

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## OVERSIGHT ACTIVITIES

This section of the report provides information on Lead IG and partner agencies' strategic planning efforts; completed, ongoing, and planned Lead IG and partner agencies' oversight work related to audits, inspections, and evaluations; Lead IG investigations; and hotline activities from October 1 through December 31, 2018. However, due to the lapse in appropriations affecting the DoS and USAID OIGs, the oversight information provided below includes limited information on the details of their activities.

### STRATEGIC PLANNING

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

### FY 2019 Joint Strategic Oversight Plan Activities

Starting in late 2014, upon designation of the DoD IG as the Lead IG for OIR, the three Lead IG agencies developed and implemented a joint strategic oversight plan for comprehensive oversight of OIR. That oversight plan has been updated each year. The *FY 2019 Joint Strategic Oversight Plan for Operation Inherent Resolve*, effective October 1, 2018, organized OIR-related oversight projects into five strategic oversight areas: 1) Security, 2) Governance and Civil Society, 3) Humanitarian Assistance, 4) Stabilization, and 5) Support to Mission. The strategic plan was included in the *FY 2019 Comprehensive Oversight Plan for Overseas Contingency Operations*.

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

The most recent meeting in November 2018 featured Mark Swayne, Acting Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for Stability and Humanitarian Affairs. He provided an overview of the 2018 joint DoD-DoS-USAID Stabilization Assistance Review and the proposed framework for maximizing the effectiveness of U.S. Government efforts to stabilize conflict-affected areas.



FY 2019  
Comprehensive  
Oversight Plan  
for Overseas  
Contingency  
Operations

## Lead IG Strategic Oversight Areas

### SECURITY

*Security* focuses on determining the degree to which the OCO is accomplishing its mission to defeat violent extremists by providing security assistance to partner security forces. Activities that fall under this strategic oversight area include:

- Conducting counterterrorism operations against violent extremist organizations
- Training and equipping partner security forces
- Advising and assisting partner security forces
- Advising and assisting ministry-level security officials

### GOVERNANCE AND CIVIL SOCIETY

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

- Building or enhancing host-nation governance capacity, including the ability to sustainably resource its activities and services
- Countering and reducing corruption, social inequality, and extremism
- Promoting inclusive and effective democracy, civil participation, and empowerment of women
- Promoting reconciliation, peaceful conflict resolution, demobilization and reintegration of armed forces, and other rule of law efforts
- Fostering sustainable economic development activities
- Encouraging fair distribution of resources and provision of essential services
- Supporting sustainable and appropriate reconstruction activities

### HUMANITARIAN ASSISTANCE

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

- Providing food, water, medical care, emergency relief, and shelter to people affected by crisis
- Building resilience by supporting community-based mechanisms that incorporate national disaster risk reduction, emergency preparedness, and humanitarian response systems
- Assisting and protecting internally displaced persons and returning refugees
- Setting the conditions which enable recovery and promote strong, positive social cohesion

*(continued on next page)*

## Lead IG Strategic Areas *(continued from previous page)*

### STABILIZATION

*Stabilization* focuses on U.S. Government efforts to enable persons affected by the contingency operation to return to or remain in their homes with the expectation of basic security, and government and public services. Activities that fall under this strategic oversight area include:

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

### SUPPORT TO MISSION

*Support to Mission* focuses on the United States' administrative, logistical, and management efforts that enable military operations, empower host-nation governance, and provide humanitarian assistance to the local population. Activities that fall under this strategic oversight area include:

- Ensuring the security of U.S. personnel and property
- Providing for the occupational health and safety of personnel
- Supporting the logistical needs of U.S. installations
- Managing government grants and contracts
- Administering government programs

## AUDIT, INSPECTION, AND EVALUATION ACTIVITY

The Lead IG agencies use dedicated, rotational, and temporary employees as well as contractors to conduct oversight projects, investigate fraud and corruption, and fulfill their congressional mandate in strategic planning and reporting. Following an expeditionary workforce model, some oversight staff from the Lead IG agencies are stationed in offices in Iraq, Kuwait, Qatar, Egypt, and Germany. Oversight teams from these offices and from offices in the United States travel to Jordan, Turkey, and other locations in the region to conduct fieldwork for their projects.

This quarter, the Lead IG agencies and their partner agencies completed nine reports related to OIR. These reports examined various activities that support OIR, including readiness, foreign assistance programs, contract management, munitions accountability, and border protection and port of entry activities. As of December 31, 2018, 35 projects were ongoing and 19 projects were planned.



## Final Reports by Lead IG Agencies

### DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE OFFICE OF INSPECTOR GENERAL

#### Evaluation of Social Media Exploitation Procedures Supporting Operation Inherent Resolve (OIR)

DODIG-2019-042; December 28, 2018

The final report is classified. A summary of this report along with its findings and recommendations is available in the classified appendix to this report.

#### U.S. Air Forces in Europe Plans for the Procurement and Pre-Positioning of Deployable Air Base Kits

DODIG-2019-040; December 27, 2018

The DoD OIG conducted this evaluation to determine whether the U.S. Air Forces in Europe developed a plan for procuring and pre-positioning Deployable Air Base System-Facilities, Equipment, and Vehicles Kits within the U.S. European Command (USEUCOM) area of responsibility. In 2016, USEUCOM directed U.S. Air Forces in Europe to develop requirements to meet the capability for deployable air bases. The U.S. Air Forces in Europe developed the Deployable Air Base Kit program, focusing on pre-positioning U.S. Air Force equipment to include tents, vehicles, medical supplies, and airfield repair equipment. The kits enhance the ability to stand up an air base in the event of a contingency, thereby reducing the time and cost of transporting equipment from either the continental United States or other existing bases in the area of responsibility.

The DoD OIG found that there were discrepancies between the planned procurement of the kits and construction of storage facilities for the kits and the actual time required to procure the kits and construct the storage facilities.

The DoD OIG made two recommendations. First, the DoD OIG recommended that the U.S. Air Forces in Europe designate a program manager at the director level for the Deployable Air Base Kits program, and require the program manager to review and update the program's plan semi-annually. Second, the DoD OIG recommended that USEUCOM establish an end date for the pre-positioning of the 24 Deployable Air Base Kits in its area of responsibility. Management agreed with the recommendations.

### DEPARTMENT OF STATE OFFICE OF INSPECTOR GENERAL

#### Audit of the Bureau of Near Eastern Affairs Selection and Management of Contract Oversight Personnel in Iraq

AUD-MERO-19-10; November 30, 2018

The DoS OIG conducted this audit to determine whether 1) the Bureau of Near Eastern Affairs' nomination and selection process for Contracting Officer's Representatives (COR) and Government Technical Monitors (GTM) in Iraq resulted in the designation of qualified personnel; 2) the Bureau established and implemented an effective process to hold these officials accountable for their performance; and 3) the officials documented contractor performance in the official contract file in accordance with Federal and DoS requirements.

The DoS OIG determined that the Bureau did not consistently nominate CORs and GTMs with the required certification level and technical expertise to oversee contracts in Iraq and did not establish work commitments or seek feedback from the Contracting Officers to effectively hold CORs and GTMs accountable for their performance. The DoS OIG also found that CORs did not always maintain complete contract files and sometimes relied on contractors to maintain certain documentation.

The DoS OIG made 13 recommendations to the Bureau of Near Eastern Affairs and the Bureau of Administration focusing on COR and GTM certification, technical expertise, and other qualifications; the nomination and performance rating of CORs and GTMs; the creation, organization, and execution of a multi-bureau working group to remedy identified shortfalls with the current and future COR workforce; and the update of contract and COR file maintenance standard operating procedures and corresponding checklists for the maintenance of all pertinent documents. Management agreed with the recommendations.

### **Inspection of the Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor**

ISP-I-19-11; October 31, 2018

The DoS OIG conducted this inspection of the Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor to assess the Bureau's executive direction, program and policy implementation, resource management, and management controls.

The DoS OIG determined that the Bureau had increased internal control risks for Leahy vetting, visa ineligibility determinations, and foreign assistance management due to staffing shortfalls and the lack of an effective strategic planning process. Also, the Bureau had increased risk of waste, fraud, mismanagement, and delays in modernizing information technology systems used to conduct Leahy vetting due to insufficient staffing and oversight. Finally, the Bureau did not dedicate sufficient staff, training resources, or strategic direction to prepare human rights assessments related to visa processing and sanction functions.

The DoS OIG made 10 recommendations. These recommendations related to instituting a formal, periodic process to develop policy goals, monitor results, and align resources with priorities; developing internal control procedures for the Leahy program; and developing and implementing a project plan to modernize information technology systems. Other recommendations addressed training on international religious freedom and human rights assessments. Management agreed with the recommendations.

### **Inspection of the Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor's Foreign Assistance Program Management**

ISP-I-19-12; October 31, 2018

The DoS OIG conducted this inspection to determine whether the Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor's foreign assistance program management was consistent with Section 209 of the Foreign Service Act of 1980. The inspection covered the foreign assistance program management's policy implementation, resource management, and management controls.

The DoS OIG determined that the Bureau's foreign assistance program took steps to strengthen internal controls, but 11 of 26 direct-hire positions in the Office of Global Programming were vacant. The Bureau did not systematically conduct and document site visits in accordance with monitoring plans, and the Bureau did not update risk assessments and monitoring plans annually for 7 of the 13 grant files reviewed. The Bureau returned \$6.6 million in canceled funds, despite having the statutory reclassification authority to extend most foreign assistance appropriations. Finally, the Bureau did not accurately record expenditures of foreign assistance grants accurately into the DoS financial system, creating the potential for violations of the Anti-Deficiency Act.

The DoS OIG made six recommendations. These recommendations involved implementing quality control procedures to regularly update risk assessments and monitoring plans and update document site visits in accordance with these plans. The other recommendations related to identifying and classifying foreign assistance funds and modifying grant processes to accurately record expenditures and monitor grant irregularities. Management agreed with the recommendations.

## **Final Reports by Partner Agencies**

### **AIR FORCE AUDIT AGENCY**

#### **Munitions Management**

F2019-001-RA0000; November 7, 2018

The Air Force Audit Agency (AFAA) conducted this audit to determine whether U.S. Air Forces Central Command personnel accounted for, safeguarded, and stored munitions in accordance with DoD and Air Force guidance. This audit was conducted in four locations, including 379th Air Expeditionary Wing, Al Udeid Air Base, Qatar.

The AFAA determined that U.S. Air Forces Central Command personnel properly accounted for and safeguarded munitions. However, the AFAA also found that personnel at two locations stored incompatible munitions together, and stored munitions outdoors without proper coverage or protection as required by Air Force guidance and technical orders.

The AFAA recommended the U.S. Air Forces Central Command, Directorate of Logistics, Munitions Branch Commander, establish periodic oversight verifying compliance with Air Force and technical order outdoor munitions storage requirements. Management agreed with the recommendation.

### **DEPARTMENT OF HOMELAND SECURITY OFFICE OF INSPECTOR GENERAL**

#### **CBP's Searches of Electronic Devices at Ports of Entry**

OIG-19-02; December 3, 2018

The Department of Homeland Security (DHS) OIG conducted this audit to determine whether the U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP) conducts searches of electronic devices at or between U.S. ports of entry according to required procedures.

Between April 2016 and July 2017, CBP's Office of Field Operations did not always conduct searches of electronic devices at U.S. ports of entry according to its standard operating procedures. In addition, Office of Field Operations officers did not consistently disconnect electronic devices, specifically cell phones, from the network before searching them because DHS headquarters did not provide consistent guidance to the ports of entry on disabling data connections on electronic devices.

The DHS OIG made five recommendations to the Executive Assistant Commissioner for the Office of Field Operations to improve CBP's oversight of searches of electronic devices at ports of entry. These recommendations include ensuring that officers properly document their actions, equipment used during advanced searches is accounted for, and travelers' copied information is immediately deleted from thumb drives. Management agreed with the recommendations.

## GOVERNMENT ACCOUNTABILITY OFFICE

### OPERATION CONTRACT SUPPORT: Actions Needed to Strengthen DoD Vendor Vetting Efforts

GAO-19-37C; December 20, 2018

The final report is classified. A summary of this report along with its findings and recommendations is available in the classified appendix to this report.

### SPECIAL OPERATIONS FORCES: Actions Needed to Manage Increased Demand and Improve Data for Assessing Readiness

GAO-19-1497C; October 12, 2018

The final report is classified. A summary of this report along with its findings and recommendations is available in the classified appendix to this report.

## ONGOING OVERSIGHT ACTIVITIES

As of December 31, 2018, the Lead IG agencies and their partner agencies had 35 ongoing projects related to OIR. Tables 2 and 3 list the title and objective for each of these projects. Figure 6 describes the ongoing projects by strategic oversight area.

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

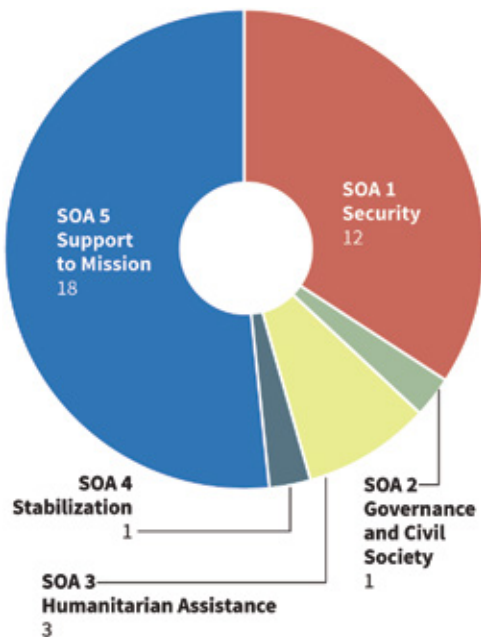
### Security

The DoD OIG, DoS OIG, the Department of Justice (DoJ) OIG, DHS OIG, and GAO have ongoing audits related to security.

- The **DoD OIG** is conducting an evaluation of DoD intelligence programs related to special intelligence interrogation methods. This audit will, among other things, determine whether the OIR commander's intelligence requirements are being satisfied and whether the approaches and techniques used by interrogators adhere to applicable DoD policies and regulations.

Figure 6.

### Ongoing Projects by Strategic Oversight Area



- The **DoD OIG** is conducting an audit of Iraqi Border Guard equipment to determine whether the equipment requirements were checked against specific, identified, and demonstrated needs.
- The **DoJ OIG** is reviewing the FBI's efforts to address homegrown violent extremists and the Bureau of Prisons' counterterrorism and security efforts.
- The **DoJ OIG** is conducting a review of the Bureau of Prisons' policies, procedures, and practices for monitoring inmates with known or suspected ties to domestic and foreign terrorism as well as its efforts to prevent further radicalization among its inmate population.
- The **DHS OIG** has ongoing projects to review programs that are intended to protect the nation's critical infrastructure and to secure U.S. borders. For example, the DHS OIG is conducting evaluations on the electronic device searching procedures between U.S. ports, and the methodology for Federal Air Marshal International flight coverage and the capabilities for interdicting improvised explosive devices.
- The **GAO** is evaluating U.S. assistance to Iraq's Ministry of the Interior to determine the amount and objectives of U.S. assistance to the Ministry of Interior and its forces.

### Governance and Civil Society

- The **DoS OIG** is conducting an audit of DoS grants and cooperative agreements intended for countering violent extremism in the Middle East to determine whether DoS has developed goals and objectives for its countering violent extremism strategy and has monitored grants and cooperative agreements to ensure they support those goals and objectives.

### Humanitarian Assistance

- **USAID OIG** is conducting an audit to determine what corrective actions the Syria-response implementer has taken to remedy internal control weaknesses and known gaps identified by USAID OIG investigations.
- The **DoS OIG** is auditing the Bureau of Population, Migration, and Refugees' assistance to internally displaced persons in Iraq to determine whether the Bureau has effective controls in place to ensure that U.S. funds are used for their intended purposes.

### Stabilization

- **USAID OIG** is conducting an audit to determine the extent to which USAID has coordinated its efforts in Iraq, and whether select USAID-sponsored programs are delivering benefits to recipients as intended.

## Support to Mission

The Lead IG agencies and their partner agencies are conducting audits related to equipment accountability, contracting, combat readiness, sexual assault prevention, and internal controls.

- The **DoD OIG** is evaluating whether the U.S. Air Force accounted for the Air Force Contract Augmentation Program IV Government-furnished property in Southwest Asia.
- The **DoD OIG** is auditing whether the DoD accounted for the Counter-ISIS Train and Equip Fund equipment from procurement through divestment.
- The **DoD OIG** is conducting an audit to determine whether DoD components, including USCENTCOM, incorporated operational contract support training to force development for military and DoD civilian personnel.
- The **DoS OIG** is auditing fuel acquisition and distribution in Turkey and Lebanon to determine whether fuel acquisition, storage, and distribution are performed in accordance with contract terms and Federal regulations.
- The **DoS OIG** is also evaluating common challenges and best practices identified in the OIG’s audits that can be replicated across the DoS to improve the invoice review process for overseas contingency operations.
- The **Air Force Audit Agency** is auditing sexual assault prevention and response programs in multiple locations, including Qatar and Kuwait, to determine whether personnel managed reported cases and incidents in accordance with DoD and Air Force guidance, and complied with personnel assignment, background investigations, training, awareness, and operations support requirements.
- The **Air Force Audit Agency** is auditing whether personnel are maintaining accountability for munitions and containers in accordance with Air Force guidance.
- The **Army Audit Agency** is evaluating whether the Army has taken necessary actions to mitigate risks associated with the expeditionary contracting material weakness.

Table 2.

### Ongoing Oversight Projects by Lead IG Agency, as of December 31, 2018

Project Title	Objective
<b>DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE OFFICE OF INSPECTOR GENERAL</b>	
<b><i>Audit of U.S. Air Force Contract Augmentation Program IV Government Furnished Property</i></b>	To determine whether the U.S. Air Force accounted for the Air Force Contract Augmentation Program (AFCAP) IV Government-furnished property (GFP) in Southwest Asia.
<b><i>Evaluation of DoD Efforts to Combat Trafficking in Persons at DoD Facilities in Kuwait</i></b>	To determine whether 1) DoD contracts in Kuwait comply with combating trafficking in persons requirements in statutes, the Federal Acquisition Regulation, Defense Acquisition Regulations System, and other DoD guidance; and 2) DoD officials are providing effective oversight in accordance with command responsibility and contracting regulations, including taking measures to address any instances of non-compliance.

Project Title	Objective
<b><i>Under Secretary of Defense for Intelligence and Defense Intelligence Agency Oversight of Special Intelligence Interrogation Methods</i></b>	To determine whether the Office of the Under Secretary of Defense for Intelligence and the Defense Intelligence Agency's oversight of intelligence interrogation approaches and techniques used by the combatant commands adhere to applicable DoD policies and regulations, and the overall effect of these policies and regulations on the interrogation process.
<b><i>Audit of Operational Contract Support Force Development</i></b>	To determine whether DoD components incorporated operational contract support training into force development for military and DoD civilian personnel.
<b><i>Audit of Iraqi Border Guard Equipment</i></b>	To determine whether the CJTF-OIR validated the requirements for Iraqi border guard equipment against specific, identified, and demonstrated needs.
<b><i>Summary Audit of Systemic Weaknesses in the Cost of War Reports</i></b>	To summarize systemic weaknesses in the DoD's accounting for costs associated with ongoing contingencies identified in <i>Cost of War</i> audit reports issued between 2016 and 2018.
<b><i>Audit of DoD's Accountability of Equipment Designated for Syria</i></b>	To determine whether the DoD accounted for Counter-Islamic State of Iraq and Syria Train and Equip Fund equipment designated for Syria from procurement through divestment.
<b>DEPARTMENT OF STATE OFFICE OF INSPECTOR GENERAL</b>	
<b><i>Audit of Assistance to Internally Displaced Persons in Iraq</i></b>	To determine whether the Bureau of Population, Refugees, and Migration monitored humanitarian assistance provided to Iraqi internally displaced persons in accordance with Federal requirements, DoS policies and guidance, and award terms and conditions.
<b><i>Audit of Grants and Cooperative Agreements Intended for Countering Violent Extremism (CVE) in the Middle East</i></b>	To determine whether the DoS has developed goals and objectives for its CVE strategy and has monitored grants and cooperative agreements to ensure that they support those goals and objectives.
<b><i>Compliance Review of the Emergency Action Plan for U.S. Embassy Baghdad, Iraq</i></b>	To determine whether U.S. Embassy Baghdad has addressed key Emergency Action Plan findings from the body of work composed by DoS OIG since 2012, and if preparations for foreseeable emergencies reflect the evolving security situation in Iraq.
<b><i>Lessons Learned from Audits of Contracting Officer Representative Responsibility for Overseeing Invoices for Overseas Contingency Operations Contracts</i></b>	To identify 1) common challenges identified in DoS OIG's series of invoice review audits and measures to address them; 2) best practices identified in DoS OIG's audits that can be replicated across the DoD to improve the invoice review process for overseas contingency operations; and 3) the invoice review practices of other U.S. Government agencies involved in overseas contingency operations that can be adopted by the DoD to improve the efficacy of its invoice review process in Iraq.

Project Title	Objective
<i>Audit of Fuel Acquisition and Distribution in Lebanon and Turkey</i>	To determine whether DoS oversight personnel in Lebanon and Turkey have implemented adequate controls to ensure that the fuel contractor performed acquisition, storage, and distribution of fuel in accordance with contract terms, Federal regulations, and DoS guidance, and whether the bureaus are adhering to policies and procedures to ensure the safety and security of post personnel.
<i>Audit of Worldwide Protective Services Task Orders for Iraq and South Sudan</i>	To determine whether the Bureau of Diplomatic Security's management and oversight of the Triple Canopy task order is being conducted in accordance with Federal and DoS regulations and guidelines.
<b>U.S. AGENCY FOR INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT OFFICE OF INSPECTOR GENERAL</b>	
<i>Audit of Selected Obligations and Costs Incurred Under USAID's Overseas Contingency Operations Relating to USAID's Humanitarian Assistance in Syria and Neighboring Countries</i>	To determine whether 1) USAID awarded, obligated, modified, monitored, and reported funds according to established requirements; and 2) the costs incurred were supported, allowable, allocable, and reasonable in accordance with established requirements and award provisions.
<i>Audit of USAID's Oversight of Selected Implementer Delivering Humanitarian Assistance in Response to the Syrian Crisis</i>	To determine 1) what corrective actions the selected Syria-response implementer has taken to remedy internal control weaknesses identified by investigations; and 2) if USAID eliminated oversight gaps identified by investigations of the selected Syria-response implementer.
<i>Audit of USAID/Iraq Activities</i>	To determine the extent USAID has coordinated its efforts in Iraq, and whether select USAID sponsored programs are delivering benefits to recipients as intended.

Table 3.

**Ongoing Oversight Projects by Lead IG Partner Agencies, as of December 31, 2018**

Project Title	Objective
<b>AIR FORCE AUDIT AGENCY</b>	
<i>Sexual Assault Prevention and Response Program Management</i>	To determine whether personnel 1) managed reported cases and incidents in accordance with DoD and Air Force guidance; and 2) complied with personnel assignment, background investigations, training, awareness, and operations support requirements.
<i>Contract Administration in a Contingency Environment</i>	To determine whether Wing personnel properly 1) planned, competed, and awarded contingency contracts (including trafficking in persons clause); 2) provided oversight and quality assurance over contractor performance (including combatting trafficking in persons); and 3) responded to potential trafficking in persons violations.



Project Title	Objective
<b>ARMY AUDIT AGENCY</b>	
<i>Expeditionary Contracting Material Weakness</i>	To determine whether the Army has taken necessary actions to mitigate risks associated with the expeditionary contracting material weakness.
<i>Reach-Back Contracting Support</i>	To determine whether the Army has an effective plan, procedures, and organizational structure in place to directly provide contracting support during contingency/expeditionary operations.
<b>DEPARTMENT OF HOMELAND SECURITY OFFICE OF INSPECTOR GENERAL</b>	
<i>Audit of the DHS Insider Threat Operations Center for Unclassified DHS Systems and Networks</i>	To determine whether the DHS Office of the Chief Security Officer has effectively implemented a Department-wide capability to monitor, detect, and respond to malicious insider threat activities on unclassified DHS systems and networks.
<i>Department of Homeland Security's Efforts for Counter Terrorism Measures for High Risk Buildings</i>	To determine the extent to which DHS provides measures for commercial sector critical infrastructure to deter, prevent or reduce the impact of an attack.
<i>Effectiveness of Customs and Border Protection Covert Testing Program</i>	To determine whether CBP's covert testing is identifying vulnerabilities with ports of entry, and whether CBP is using the results to address them.
<i>Access Control and Security Identification Display Area Badge Covert Testing</i>	To determine whether the Transportation Security Administration implements effective requirements and procedures to safeguard the sterile areas of U.S. airports.
<i>Federal Air Marshal Service–International Flight Operations</i>	To evaluate the methodology for Federal Air Marshal International flight coverage and the capabilities for interdicting improvised explosive devices.
<i>Transportation Security Administration's Prevention of Terrorism Through its Foreign Repair Station Inspections</i>	To determine whether Transportation Security Administration's (TSA) inspection processes effectively identify and mitigate aircraft tampering risks, and how it works with the Department of Transportation's Federal Aviation Administration at foreign repair stations that the TSA cannot inspect.
<i>U.S. Customs and Border Protection's Air Cargo Advance Screening Program</i>	To determine to what extent the CBP Air Cargo Advance Screening Program can identify high-risk cargo shipments prior to departing foreign airports.
<i>U.S. Customs and Border Protection's Global Entry Program</i>	To determine to what extent CBP controls over Global Entry prevent high risk travelers from obtaining expedited screening.
<b>DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE OFFICE OF INSPECTOR GENERAL</b>	
<i>Efforts to Address Homegrown Violent Extremists</i>	To 1) review the FBI's homegrown violent extremist casework and resource management; 2) evaluate the FBI's coordination with relevant components and its strategic and tactical policies and processes to identify and address threats; and 3) assess the FBI field divisions' implementation of strategic and tactical policies and processes to investigate homegrown violent extremist threats.

Project Title	Objective
<b><i>Audit of the Bureau of Prisons' Counterterrorism Efforts</i></b>	To review the Bureau of Prisons' policies, procedures, and practices for monitoring inmates with known or suspected ties to domestic and foreign terrorism and its efforts to prevent further radicalization among inmate populations.
<b><i>FBI's Management of Maritime Terrorism Threats</i></b>	To review the FBI's roles and responsibilities for 1) assessing maritime terrorist threats; 2) preventing and responding to maritime terrorist incidents; and 3) coordinating with DHS components to ensure seaport security.
<b>GOVERNMENT ACCOUNTABILITY OFFICE</b>	
<b><i>Evaluation of the Office of Security Cooperation-Iraq Activities</i></b>	To conduct independent analysis of the DoD and DoS plan to transition the activities conducted by Office of Security Cooperation-Iraq but funded by the DoD to another entity, or transition the funding of such activities to another source, as required by Public Law 114-328.
<b><i>Feasibility of Separating Amounts Designated as OCO from Base Amounts</i></b>	To determine 1) to what extent has the DoD included internal controls in its processes to account for OCO-designated amounts separately from amounts designated for base activities in the O&M account; 2) what process, if any, does the Department of the Treasury (Treasury) use to account for OCO-designated amounts separately from amounts designated for the DoD base activities in the O&M account; 3) to what extent do the DoD's and Treasury's processes to account for OCO-designated amounts separately from amounts designated for base activities in the O&M account follow generally accepted accounting principles; and 4) what alternative approaches could be used to account for OCO-designated amounts separately from amounts designated for base activities in the O&M account, and has the DoD or Treasury assessed any alternatives.
<b><i>U.S. Assistance to Iraq's Ministry of Interior</i></b>	To determine 1) amounts and objectives of U.S. assistance to the MoI and its forces; 2) to what extent have U.S. agencies assessed their assistance to the MoI and its forces, and what are the results of the assessments; and 3) to what extent have the DoD and DoS vetted the MoI and its forces for gross violations of human rights and associations with terrorist groups or groups associated with the government of Iran.
<b>NAVAL AUDIT SERVICE</b>	
<b><i>Department of the Navy Husbanding and Port Services Provider Program - U.S. Fleet Forces</i></b>	To verify that 1) processes and internal controls over management, execution, and oversight of the Navy Husbanding and Port Services Provider Program are in place, functioning effectively, and are in compliance with applicable laws and regulations, and 2) agreed-to corrective actions on closed recommendations in the previous Naval Audit Service report, "Navy Husbanding and Port Services Contracts," dated September 30, 2014 were properly implemented.

## PLANNED OVERSIGHT ACTIVITIES

As of December 31, 2018, the Lead IG agencies and their partner agencies had 19 planned projects related to OIR. Tables 4 and 5 list the project title and objective for each of these projects. Figure 7 describes the planned projects by strategic oversight area.

The following highlights some of these planned projects by strategic oversight area.

### SECURITY

- The **DoD OIG** will evaluate whether U.S. and Coalition train, advise, assist, and equip efforts enable the Iraqi Qwat Khasah (Special Forces) to defeat insurgents in accordance with theater campaign objectives.
- The **Department of the Treasury OIG** will evaluate whether Terrorist Financing and Intelligence's actions are meeting Treasury's responsibilities to disrupt ISIS funding.

### GOVERNANCE AND CIVIL SOCIETY

There are no additional oversight projects of governance and civil society planned for OIR.

### HUMANITARIAN ASSISTANCE

There are no additional oversight projects of humanitarian assistance planned for OIR.

### STABILIZATION

- The **DoD OIG** will determine whether the DoD effectively planned and coordinated its reconstruction and stabilization efforts in Iraq.
- The **DoS OIG** will evaluate whether the DoS has policies in place to ensure that its post-conflict foreign assistance programs in Iraq are sustainable.

### SUPPORT TO MISSION

- The **DoD OIG** will evaluate civilian casualty evacuation and reporting procedures to determine if there are accurate accounts of potential civilian casualties resulting from OIR airstrikes.
- The **DoS OIG** will examine whether there was effective quality assurance processes in place to ensure that the contractor builds the Erbil Consulate to the specifications agreed upon.
- The **DoS OIG** will conduct an audit to determine whether DoS contractors are proving armoring services to the Department that comply with contract terms and conditions.
- The **Air Force Audit Agency** will determine whether personnel properly authorized, accounted for, stored, and maintained War Reserve Materiel.
- The **Army Audit Agency** will evaluate whether base operations support in Kuwait and Qatar meets mission needs.

Figure 7.

#### Planned Projects by Strategic Oversight Area

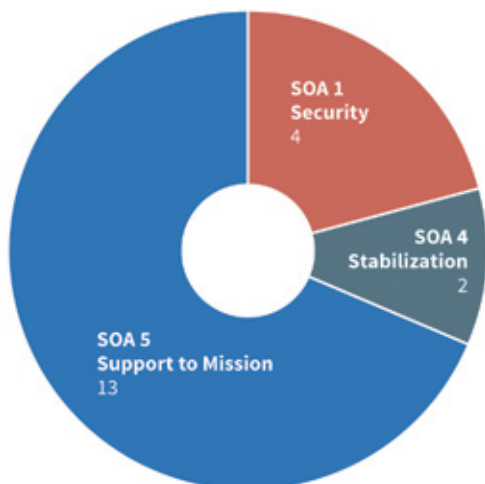


Table 4.

**Planned Oversight Projects by Lead IG Agencies, as of December 31, 2018**

<b>Project Title</b>	<b>Objective</b>
<b>DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE OFFICE OF INSPECTOR GENERAL</b>	
<i><b>Audit of the DoD Plan for Reconstruction and Stabilization in Iraq</b></i>	To determine whether DoD effectively planned and coordinated its reconstruction and stabilization efforts in Iraq.
<i><b>Evaluation of USCENTCOM CAOC Civilian Casualty Evaluation and Reporting procedures</b></i>	To determine if USCENTCOM CAOC civilian casualty evacuation and reporting procedures accurately accounts for potential civilian casualties resulting from OIR airstrikes.
<i><b>Evaluation of Tactical Signals Intelligence Processing, Exploitation and Dissemination Support to OIR/OFS</b></i>	To determine if Theater Support Activity's tactical Signals Intelligence Processing, Exploitation and Dissemination support is sufficient to satisfy OIR/OFS Priority Intelligence Requirements.
<i><b>Evaluation of U.S. and Coalition Efforts to Train, Advise, Assist, and Equip the Iraqi Qwat Khasah</b></i>	To determine whether U.S. and Coalition efforts to train, advise, assist, and equip the Iraqi Qwat Khasah is effectively developing its ability to disrupt, destroy, and defeat insurgents in accordance with theater campaign objectives.
<b>DEPARTMENT OF STATE OFFICE OF INSPECTOR GENERAL</b>	
<i><b>Audit of New Consulate Construction—Erbil, Iraq</b></i>	To determine whether the Bureau of Overseas Buildings Operations has effective quality assurance processes in place to ensure that the contractor builds the Erbil Consulate according to contract specifications.
<i><b>Audit of the Aviation Working Capital Fund Cost Center</b></i>	To determine whether the fees collected by the Aviation Working Capital Fund cost center were sufficient to cover all costs required to sustain operations in Iraq and Afghanistan.
<i><b>Audit of Iraq's Post-Conflict Development and Sustainment</b></i>	To determine whether the DoS has policies in place to ensure that its post-conflict foreign assistance programs in Iraq are sustained.
<i><b>Audit of Logistics and Freight Forwarding Operations provided by Pacific Architects and Engineers, Inc., in Iraq</b></i>	To determine whether logistics and freight forwarding are being conducted in accordance with acquisition regulations and departmental policies, are being monitored by the DoS, and include fair and reasonable prices.
<i><b>Audit of DoS Armored Vehicle Procurement Process</b></i>	To determine whether DoS contractors are providing armoring services to the DoS that comply with contract terms and conditions.
<i><b>Audit of the Property Accountability at the Baghdad Diplomatic Support Center in Iraq</b></i>	To determine the extent to which the DoS and U.S. Mission Iraq's policies, procedures, controls, and personnel were in place and operating as intended to ensure property was accounted for properly.
<i><b>Audit of the Administration and Oversight of Grants within the Office to Monitor and Combat Trafficking in Persons</b></i>	To determine to what extent the Combat Trafficking in Persons Office's administration and oversight of grants are in accordance with applicable Federal acquisition regulations and DoS guidance.

Project Title	Objective
<i>Audit of Antiterrorism Assistance Program in the Philippines and Jordan</i>	To determine whether 1) the DoS has developed specific, measurable, and outcome-oriented objectives for the Antiterrorism Assistance programs in Jordan and the Philippines; 2) the DoS is effectively monitoring and evaluating Antiterrorism Assistance program participants' progress toward attaining program goals; and 3) the DoS has established program sustainable goals.

Table 5.

**Planned Oversight Projects by Lead IG Partner Agencies, as of December 31, 2018**

Project Title	Objective
<b>AIR FORCE AUDIT AGENCY</b>	
<i>Container Management</i>	To determine whether personnel maintained accountability and effectively determined requirements for containers within the USAFCENT area of responsibility.
<i>Air Force Office of Special Investigations Emergency and Extraordinary Expense Funds</i>	To determine whether Air Force Office of Special Investigations officials effectively managed and accounted for E-Funds at deployed locations.
<i>War Reserve Materiel Management</i>	To determine whether personnel properly authorized, accounted for, stored, and maintained War Reserve Materiel.
<b>ARMY AUDIT AGENCY</b>	
<i>Army Prepositioned Stocks (APS) 5 Issuance and Return Processes</i>	To determine whether APS-5 issuance and return processes efficiently and effectively met mission needs.
<i>Base Operations Support-Area Support Groups Kuwait and Qatar</i>	To 1) determine whether base operations support management and oversight at long term contingency locations in Kuwait and Qatar efficiently and effectively met mission needs; and 2) determine whether base operations support personnel had adequate training and experience to oversee necessary services.
<i>Theater Provided Equipment-U.S. Army Central</i>	To determine whether theater provided equipment maintenance and RESET strategies within the area of responsibility efficiently and effectively supported ongoing operations.
<b>DEPARTMENT OF TREASURY OFFICE OF INSPECTOR GENERAL</b>	
<i>Terrorist Financing and Intelligence Actions to Disrupt ISIS' Finances</i>	To determine whether Terrorist Financing and Intelligence's actions are meeting Treasury's responsibilities to disrupt ISIS financing.

## INVESTIGATIONS AND HOTLINE ACTIVITY

### Investigations

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

Due to the lapse in appropriations for the DoS and USAID OIGs, the investigative statistics provided below may not reflect all their investigative activity.

### INVESTIGATIVE ACTIVITY RELATED TO OIR

During this quarter, Lead IG investigations resulted in 1 arrest, 2 criminal charges, and 2 criminal convictions. The criminal charges stem from indictments of two individuals for bribery and money laundering as it relates to DoD contracts in Kuwait in 2016. The arrest and convictions are discussed below.

Investigative branches of the Lead IG agencies and their partner agencies closed 10 investigations, initiated 18 new investigations, and coordinated on 91 open investigations. The open investigations involve grant and procurement fraud, corruption, theft, computer intrusions, theft, and human trafficking allegations.

The Lead IG agencies and partners continue to coordinate their investigative efforts through the Fraud and Corruption Investigative Working Group, which consists of representatives from the Defense Criminal Investigative Service (DCIS, the DoD OIG's investigative division), the DoS OIG, USAID OIG, the U.S. Army Criminal Investigation Command, the Naval Criminal Investigative Service, and the Air Force Office of Special Investigations. This quarter, the Fraud and Corruption Investigative Working Group conducted 42 fraud awareness briefings for 332 participants.

The dashboard on page 65 contains a consolidated listing of the activities of these investigative components. The following are examples of investigative activities:

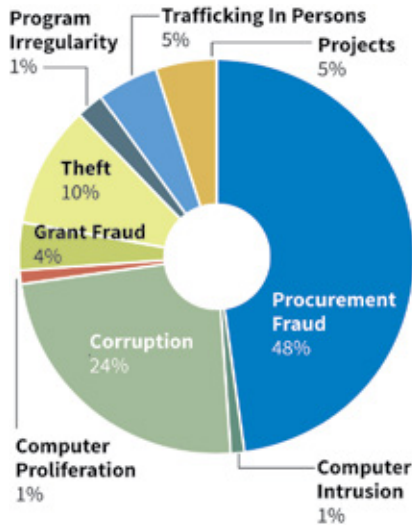
### **Arms Trafficker Found Guilty of Conspiring to Supply and Use Anti-Aircraft Missiles**

In November 2018, Rami Najm Asad-Ghanem, a naturalized U.S. citizen who was living in Egypt at the time of the offenses, was found guilty in U.S. District Court of conspiring to acquire, transfer and use U.S. missile technology designed to shoot down aircraft. The DCIS, FBI, and Homeland Security Investigations conducted this investigation.

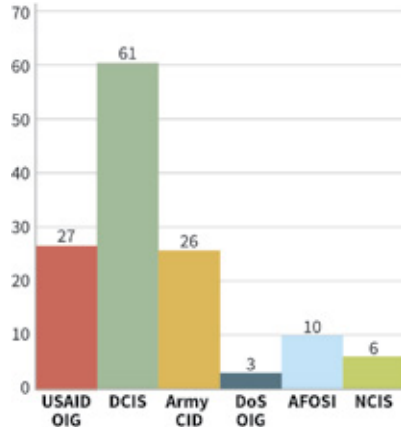
The evidence presented at the 9-day trial, including electronic communications and recorded statements, showed that Asad-Ghanem conspired to transfer a wide array of different surface-to-air missile systems to unnamed co-conspirators around the world, including clients in Libya, the United Arab Emirates, Iraq, and other countries. During the trial, prosecutors introduced corroborating testimony of co-conspirators to demonstrate that Asad-Ghanem also conspired to use Russian-made Igla and Strela surface-to-air missile systems by brokering the services of mercenary missile operators to a militant faction in Libya in 2015. Asad-Ghanem faces 25 years in prison. Sentencing is set for March 4, 2019.

# ACTIVITY BY FRAUD AND CORRUPTION INVESTIGATIVE WORKING GROUP

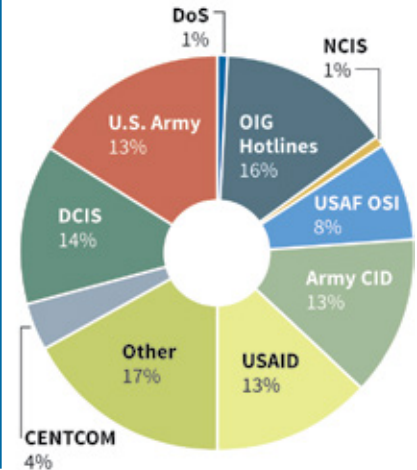
OPERATION INHERENT RESOLVE  
As of December 31, 2018



## OPEN INVESTIGATIONS BY WORKING GROUP MEMBER\*



## SOURCES OF ALLEGATIONS



OPEN INVESTIGATIONS\*  
**91**

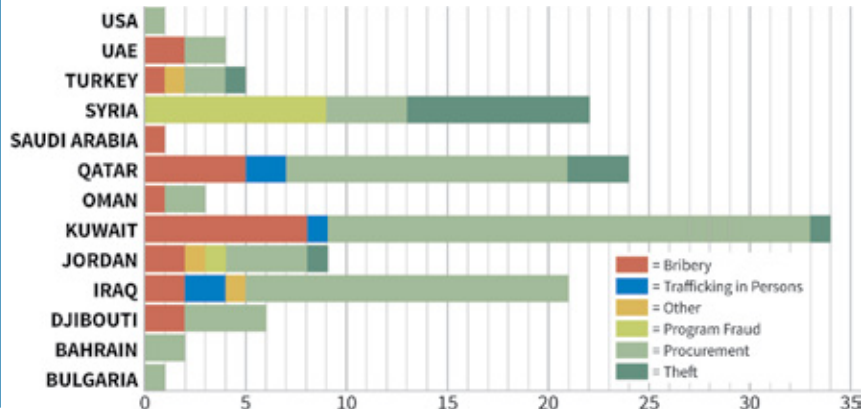
## Q1 FY 2019 RESULTS

Arrests	1
Criminal Charges	2
Criminal Convictions	2
Fines/Recoveries	—
Cost Savings to Government	—
Suspensions/Debarments	—
Personnel Actions	—
Administrative Actions	—

## Q1 FY 2019 BRIEFINGS

Briefings Held	42
Briefings Attendees	332

## PRIMARY OFFENSE LOCATIONS



\*Some investigations are joint with more than one agency and some not joint with any other agency. Therefore, the total number of Joint Open Cases may not equal the total number of Open Cases. Open Cases as of 12/31/2018. **Note:** Cumulative since 1/1/2015.

### **Joint Operation Results in Bribery Conviction**

In October 2018, Rohin Sherzai (an Afghan national), Chief Executive Officer, Green Capital Logistics Services Company, Sharja, United Arab Emirates (UAE) was arrested and convicted of bribing a U.S. Air Force contracting officer to ensure that Sherzai's company would obtain contracts at the Al Udeid Air Base, Qatar. Based on a tip from the contracting officer, the DCIS and U.S. Air Force Office of Special Investigations began an investigation, and then invited The Emirate of Abu Dhabi, Criminal Investigative Department in Abu Dhabi, UAE to join the investigation. The final judgement ordered Sherzai sentenced to one year in prison in the UAE, and subsequent deportation upon completion of his sentence.

### **INVESTIGATIVE ACTIVITY RELATED TO LEGACY CASES**

DCIS has 11 ongoing "legacy" investigations related to crimes involving the OIR area of operation that occurred prior to the designation of OIR.

### **Business Owner Extradited to U.S. for Criminal Export Violations**

Based on a legacy Operation Iraqi Freedom/New Dawn investigation conducted with the FBI and Department of Commerce, Office of Export Enforcement, David Levick and ICM Components Inc., located in Thorleigh, Australia, were indicted in 2012 by a federal grand jury in the District of Columbia for conspiring to export sensitive military and dual-use technology from the United States to Iran. The weapons systems included: components with applications in missiles, drones, torpedoes, and helicopters. Levick and ICM, when necessary, used a broker in Florida, to place orders for these goods with U.S. firms to conceal that they were intended for shipment to Iran by utilizing an entity in Malaysia controlled by an Iranian national as an intermediary. In November 2018, after filing for a formal extradition hearing, a Federal Court Judge of Australia, New South Wales, ruled that Levick was to be extradited to the United States and face charges, in compliance with the Extradition Act of 1988. On December 17, 2018, Levick was extradited and appeared before the U.S. District Court, District of Columbia, where he is currently being held to answer for the charges.

### **Kellogg Brown & Root Services, Inc. Loses Appeal**

Based on a legacy Operation Iraqi Freedom/New Dawn investigation, Kellogg Brown and Root, Inc. (KBR) lost its appeal with the Armed Services Board of Contract Appeals, which centered on Contract DAAA09-02-D-0007, the Logistics Civil Augmentation Program III (LOGCAP III). The LOGCAP III contract was the third LOGCAP contract awarded and administered by the U.S. Army to provide contingency support to augment the Army force structure. KBR was the sole prime contractor, which required it to develop a plan to support contingency operations and to leverage existing civilian resources within a Theater of Operation, as identified by the DoD.

The Armed Services Board of Contract Appeals decision related to Task Order 59 and subsequent changes under the LOGCAP III contract between 2003 and 2007. This portion of the contract was subcontracted to First Kuwaiti Trading Company (FKTC) to supply living containers (including transportation, sight preparation, and installation) to house service members and support personnel at various sites throughout Iraq. KBR paid FKTC for two Requests for Equitable Adjustments—one for delays in delivery resulting from convoy delays and a second for double handling and repairs resulting from the convoy delays.



On November 20, 2018, the Armed Services Board of Contract Appeals determined that the requests for equitable adjustments relating to living trailer delays and the double handling of those living trailers, totaling \$24,923,400.00 and \$23,831,147.25 respectively, were unreasonable and denied the claim. The Board ruled that KBR failed to show that FKTC was entitled to the equitable adjustment based on the fixed-price subcontract to transport, install and supply these trailers. This ruling resulted in a cost savings to the U.S. Government of \$48,754,547.

### Hotline

Each Lead IG agency maintains its own hotline to receive complaints and contacts specific to its agency. The hotlines provide a confidential, reliable means for individuals to report violations of law, rule, or regulation; mismanagement; gross waste of funds; or abuse of authority. The DoD OIG has an investigator to coordinate the hotline contacts among the Lead IG agencies and others as appropriate. During the quarter, the investigator referred 62 cases to Lead IG agencies and other investigative organizations.

As noted in Figure 8, the majority of the cases opened during the reporting period were related to procurement/contract administration, criminal allegations, personal misconduct, personnel matters, government resources, safety, trafficking in persons, reprisal, and security allegations.

Figure 8.

### Hotline Activities







An ISF member looks over a riverbank while manning an outpost in Iraq. (U.S. Army photo)

# APPENDICES

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## APPENDIX A

# Methodology for Preparing this Lead IG Quarterly Report to Congress

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

This report covers the period from October 1 through December 21, 2018.

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

### DATA CALL

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

Due to the partial government shutdown, the Department of Defense responded to the data call, but personnel from the following agencies were unavailable.

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

### OPEN-SOURCE RESEARCH

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

- Information publicly released by U.S. Government departments and agencies
- Congressional testimonies
- Press conferences, especially DoD and DoS briefings
- United Nations (and relevant branches)
- Reports issued by non-governmental or research organizations
- Media reports

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

### REPORT PRODUCTION

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

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

However, this quarter, due to the lapse in Federal appropriations and the resulting partial government shutdown, the DoS OIG and USAID OIG did not participate in the production of this report, and the DoS and USAID did not review this report or provide input. The Departments of Justice and the Treasury OIGs were also unable to provide content for this report.

**A U.S. Marine learns how to utilize a recoilless rifle near Tanf Garrison, Syria. (U.S. Marine Corps photo)**



## APPENDIX B

# Classified Appendix to this Report

This unclassified report includes a classified appendix that elaborates on specific topics related to OIR, as noted in several sections of this report. Each topic is discussed in an unclassified context and then using classified information provided by the DoD. For the period October 1 through December 31, 2018, the classified appendix includes the following topics:

### **SYRIA**

- ISIS Remains in Parts of Syria that Fall Outside the Coalition's Areas of Operation
- The DoD: ISIS is Becoming a De-centralized Insurgency in Syria
- ISIS Retains its Military Capabilities Despite Loss of Territory
- ISIS Uses Unmanned Aerial Systems for Reconnaissance and Attacks
- ISIS Media Efforts
- Turkey's Threatens SDF in Northeastern Syria
- DoD: SDF Unable to Conduct Offensive Operations Against ISIS Without Coalition Support
- Foreign ISIS Fighters Remain Detained
- Syrian Regime Capabilities and Intentions
- DoD: Russia is a Destabilizing Force in Syria
- Electro Magnetic and Global Positioning System Interference
- Iran Strikes ISIS in Syria

### **IRAQ**

- Coalition Diverted Resources from ISIS Fight to Track Iranian Activities in Iraq
- Operation Reliable Partnership Seeks to Address Other ISF Shortfalls
- ISIS Exploits Security Gaps between ISF and Peshmerga
  - ISIS in Iraq

### **OVERSIGHT**

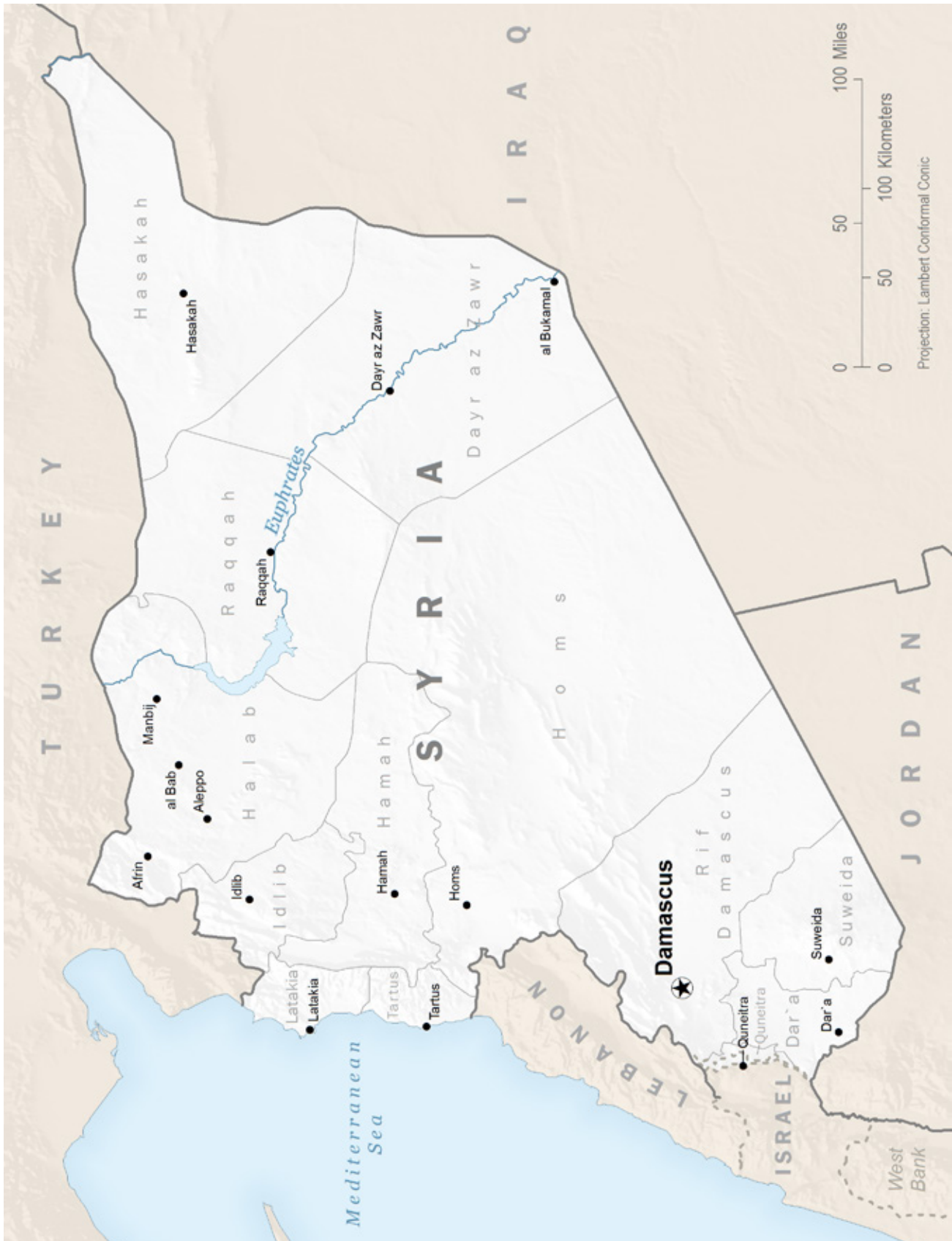
- DoD OIG
- GAO

## Acronyms

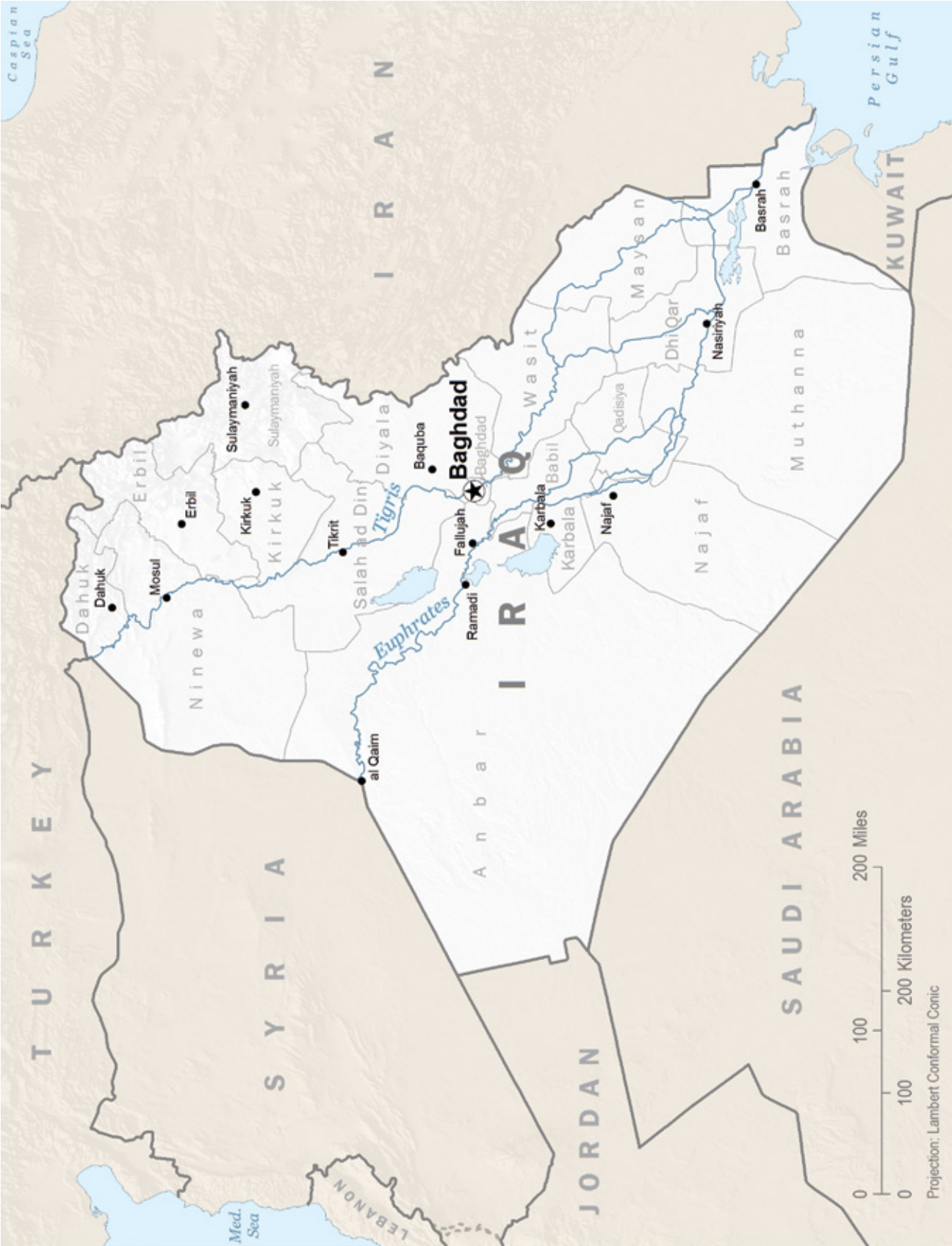
Acronym	
CJTF-OIR	Combined Joint Task Force-OIR
CTEF	Counter-ISIS Train and Equip Fund
DCIS	Defense Criminal Investigative Service
DHS	U.S. Department of Homeland Security
DIA	Defense Intelligence Agency
DoD	Department of Defense
DoS	Department of State
FBI	Federal Bureau of Investigation
FFS	Funding Facility for Stabilization
FY	fiscal year
GAO	Government Accountability Office
IED	improvised explosive device
IRGC	Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps
IRGC-QF	Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps-Quds Force
ISF	Iraqi Security Forces
ISIS	Islamic State of Iraq and Syria
ISR	intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance
KRG	Kurdistan Regional Government
Lead IG agencies	Refers to DoD OIG, DoS OIG, and USAID OIG
Lead IG	Lead Inspector General

Acronym	
MaT	Mughawir al Thawra
MERV	Middle Euphrates River Valley
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organization
NMI	NATO Mission in Iraq
NGO	non-governmental organization
OCO	Overseas Contingency Operation
OIG	Office of Inspector General
OIR	Operation Inherent Resolve
ORP	Operation Reliable Partnership
OUSD(P)/CN/GT	Office of Assistant Secretary of Defense Counter Narcotics and Global Threats
OUSD(P)/ISA	Office of the Assistant Secretary of Defense for International Security Affairs
PMF	Popular Mobilization Forces
SAC	Syrian Arab Coalition
SDF	Syrian Democratic Forces
SOA	strategic oversight area
Treasury	U.S. Department of the Treasury
UN	United Nations
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
USCENTCOM	United States Central Command
YPG	Kurdish People's Protection Units









## ENDNOTES

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