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COMMITTEE ON ARMED SERVICES
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515-6035
ONE HUNDRED THIRTEENTH CONGRESS

ROBERT L. SIMMONS, II, STAFF DIRECTOR

November 11, 2014

MEMORANDUM FOR HASC MEMBERS

RE: Full Committee Hearing on the Administration's Strategy and Military Campaign against Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL)

On Thursday, November 13, 2014, at 10:00 AM in Room 2118 of the Rayburn House Office Building, the full committee will meet in open session to receive testimony on the Administration's strategy and military campaign against ISIL.

Should you need additional information, please contact Alex Gallo (x6-7164), Mike Casey (x6-6127), or Aaron Falk (x6-3297) on the committee staff.

WITNESSES

The Honorable Chuck Hagel
Secretary of Defense

General Martin E. Dempsey
Chairman
Joint Chiefs of Staff

This memo provides an update on the U.S. policy, strategy, and military campaign against ISIL. Members and staff should also reference the memo from the hearing on U.S. Military Operations in Iraq and the Administration's Strategy for the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) for additional background and context.

U.S. POLICY AND STRATEGY AGAINST ISIL

In a speech to the nation on September 10, 2014, President Obama outlined his policy and strategy to counter ISIL in Syria and Iraq: “Our objective is clear: We will “degrade, and ultimately destroy, ISIL through a comprehensive and sustained counterterrorism strategy.”¹ He presented a four-prong strategy:

- 1. A systematic campaign of airstrikes against ISIL.**
- 2. Increased support to forces fighting ISIL on the ground.**
- 3. Drawing on our substantial counterterrorism capabilities to prevent ISIL attacks.**
- 4. Providing humanitarian assistance to innocent civilians displaced by ISIL.**²

The Administration's strategy includes nine lines of effort:

Supporting Effective Governance in Iraq: We are supporting the new Iraqi government on efforts to govern inclusively and effectively as well as to strengthen its cooperation with regional partners.

Denying ISIL Safe-Haven: We are conducting a systematic campaign of airstrikes against ISIL in Iraq and Syria. Working with the Iraqi government, we are striking ISIL targets and supporting Iraqi forces on the ground. We will degrade ISIL's leadership, logistical and operational capability, and deny it sanctuary and resources to plan, prepare and execute attacks.

Building Partner Capacity: We will build the capability and capacity of our partners in the region to sustain an effective long-term campaign against ISIL. Our advisors are working to advise Iraqi forces, including Kurdish forces, to improve their ability to plan, lead, and conduct operations against ISIL, and we will provide training to help the Iraqis reconstitute their security forces and

¹ President Obama: “We Will Degrade and Ultimately Destroy ISIL,” White House Blog, September 10, 2014; available from <http://www.whitehouse.gov/blog/2014/09/10/president-obama-we-will-degrade-and-ultimately-destroy-isil>.

² Ibid.

establish a National Guard. Our train and equip program will strengthen the Syrian moderate opposition and help the defend territory from ISIL.

Enhancing Intelligence Collection on ISIL: Continuing to gain more fidelity on ISIL’s capabilities, plans, and intentions is central to our strategy to degrade and ultimately destroy the group, and we will continue to strengthen our ability to understand this threat, as well as to share vital information with our Iraqi and Coalition partners to enable them to effectively counter ISIL.

Disrupting ISIL’s Finances: ISIL’s expansion over the past year has given it access to significant and diverse sources of funding. So, we are working aggressively with our partners on a coordinated approach to reduce ISIL’s revenue from oil and assets it has plundered; limit ISIL’s ability to extort local populations; stem ISIL’s gains from kidnapping for ransom; and disrupt the flow of external donations to the group.

Exposing ISIL’s True Nature: Clerics around the world have spoken up in recent weeks to highlight ISIL’s hypocrisy, condemning the group’s savagery and criticizing its self-proclaimed “caliphate.” We are working with our partners throughout the Muslim world to highlight ISIL’s hypocrisy and counter its false claims of acting in the name of religion.

Disrupting the Flow of Foreign Fighters: Foreign terrorist fighters are ISIL’s lifeblood, and a global security threat—with citizens of nearly 80 countries filling its ranks. On September 24, the President convened an historic Summit-level meeting of the UN Security Council, focused on this issue and we will continue to lead an international effort to stem the flow of fighters into Syria and Iraq.

Protecting the Homeland: We will continue to use the criminal justice system as a critical counterterrorism tool, work with air carriers to implement responsible threat-based security and screening requirements, and counter violent extremism here at home.

Humanitarian Support: We and our partners will continue to provide humanitarian assistance to the displaced and vulnerable in Iraq and Syria.³

THE U.S. MILITARY CAMPAIGN AGAINST ISIL

³ “FACT SHEET: The Administration’s Strategy to Counter the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) and the Updated FY 2015 Overseas Contingency Operations Request;” available from <http://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2014/11/07/fact-sheet-administration-s-strategy-counter-islamic-state-iraq-and-leva>.

The Administration provided a War Powers Notification (WPN) to Congress on August 8, 2014, which stated that the President had authorized the commander of U.S. Central Command, General Lloyd Austin, to conduct airstrikes in Iraq against ISIL to protect American personnel in Iraq from the advance of ISIL on Erbil and to help forces in Iraq as they fight to break the siege of Mount Sinjar. Following these initial airstrikes in Iraq, the Administration expanded the air campaign in Iraq, providing the following three additional WPNs to Congress:

- Support Iraqi Security Forces (ISF) operations to re-take the Mosul Dam (August 17, 2014).
- Support humanitarian assistance in Amirli, Iraq (September 1, 2014)
- Support ISF operations to hold the Haditha Dam (September 08, 2014)

For each of these authorized airstrikes, the President identified his Article II Constitutional authority.

On September 23rd, the President provided two WPNs to Congress for airstrikes in Syria against ISIL and the Khorasan group, an al-Qaeda group that operates in Syria as part of Jabhat al-Nusra (al-Qaeda's official affiliate in Syria). This was the first time the United States had conducted strikes in Syria. This was also the first time the President cited the 2001 Authorization for the Use of Military Force (AUMF) and the 2002 Iraq AUMF as the statutory basis for airstrikes. For each of the airstrikes against ISIL in Syria, the President identified his Article II Constitutional authority as well as the 2001 AUMF and the 2002 AUMF as the statutory authorities. For each of the airstrikes against the Khorasan group, which occurred on the first night of the strikes in Syria and again on November 5th, the President identified his Article II Constitutional authority and the 2001 AUMF. The September 23rd WPN was the last such notification that the President provided to Congress. The White House informed the committee that the President believes that he has the statutory authority to conduct the airstrikes in Iraq and Syria; therefore, the War Powers Resolution was no longer operative (the White House provided a white paper to the committee that outlines their interpretation of their legal authorities, which is included in Appendix D).

During the time period of the initiation, and subsequent expansion, of airstrikes in Iraq and Syria, the President also provided WPNs to Congress on the deployment of additional U.S. troops (beyond Embassy security, crisis response, and the assessment team that was deployed in June 2014) to Iraq, including:

- Deployment of 350 additional U.S. troops to provide security for U.S. personnel and the U.S. Embassy in Baghdad (September 5, 2014).

- Deployment of 475 additional U.S. troops to Iraq for support to select elements of the ISF and the Kurdish Peshmerga (September 23, 2014).

Additionally, in late September, the 300 U.S. troops who were deployed to Iraq in June 2014 to conduct an initial and on-going assessment of the ISF received an order to expand their mission set to include serving as advisors to the ISF within certain headquarters levels of the ISF and the Kurdish Peshmerga. Presently, there are approximately 1400 U.S. troops in Iraq.

A complete summary of all Iraq and Syria-related WPNs received by Congress is contained in Appendix C.

The coordination, intelligence fusion, and de-confliction with ISF and Kurdish forces continues to occur at two Joint Operations Centers (JOC) established and run by the U.S. military in Iraq. U.S. Army Major General Dana Pittard is the commander of the Title 10 U.S. effort in Iraq – reflected in the WPN summary above.

On October 15th, the Administration established an operational name for U.S. military campaign against ISIL, which is: Operation INHERENT RESOLVE.

ASSESSMENTS AND REPORTING ON THE EFFICACY OF THE CAMPAIGN

The committee has received an assessment from the Joint Staff of the effectiveness of the airstrikes against ISIL in Syria and Iraq. The Joint Staff assesses that there is evidence that Coalition strikes have been effective by disrupting ISIL operations. Additionally, the Joint Staff assesses that ISIL capabilities have been degraded in certain areas. Specifically, ISIL is having difficulty in launching large scale operations, maintaining freedom of maneuver, ensuring optimal means of command and control, maintaining their logistical infrastructure, and leveraging certain sources of funding.

In response to the U.S. airstrikes, ISIL has evacuated the hard-stand, former Syrian government buildings that they once occupied and have blended into the population, which is increasing the difficulty in targeting ISIL from the air.⁴ Its fighters are now moving in small formations, which decreases their vulnerability to airstrikes. Additionally, according to the press reporting, rather than storming towns with overwhelming force, the group is establishing more sleeper cells in the areas it wants to seize. Nonetheless, despite the disruption of ISIL from the airstrikes, the press has reported that it appears that ISIL has lost no ground in Syria, and many analysts believe that ISIL's adaptations will make it more difficult – to near impossible – to degrade or destroy without effective ground troops.⁵

⁴ Ben Hubbard, "ISIS Wave of Might Is Turning Into Ripple," *New York Times*, November 5, 2014.

⁵ Ibid.

The *New York Times* reported on November 5th that “roughly a third of Iraq is dotted by active battle fronts, with intense fighting and occasional Islamic State victories. But analysts also say the days of easy and rapid gains for the jihadists may be coming to a close in Iraq, as the group’s momentum appears to be stalling.”⁶ More recently, ISF, Kurdish peshmerga, Shiite militias, and Sunni tribesmen have aided in seizing the Rabia crossing with Syria, taken back the area of Zumar in the north and Jurf al-Sakr south of Baghdad, opened key roads; and held off ISIL advances elsewhere. For example, “For the first time since the jihadists seized Mosul and much of northwestern Iraq in June, an Iraqi military vehicle can drive from Baghdad to the northern city of Erbil on a main highway.”⁷ And Iraqi expert on ISIL, Hisham Alhashimi, has said that said these changes have “broken up the group’s territory, making it harder for it to move its forces and for its couriers to relay messages among the leadership and the field commanders.”⁸ Yet, ISIL has made gains in Iraq – particularly in Anbar province and south of Baghdad in the vicinity of Hit. Analysts are also saying that there are other factors, other than the airstrikes, which are having effects in making the environment more difficult for ISIL such as the unfavorable sectarian dynamics, pushback against ISIL within overrun communities, degradation to the group’s finances in Syria, and marginal improvements of the Iraqi Security Forces.

Additionally, during a recent speech at the Atlantic Council, GEN Austin, the commander of U.S. Central Command, asserted that the airstrikes were working. He went on to state:

I’m confident we’re having the desired effects. What we want to do is take away the enemies’ ability to command and control, his ability to sustain himself, his ability to project combat power and his ability to move forces back and forth across the Iraq/Syria border...

They are afraid to congregate in any sizable formation. They know if we can see them, we’re going to engage them and we’re going to hit what we’re aiming at.⁹

GEN Austin also said that the U.S. military has significantly degraded the group’s ability to communicate and that the Coalition was able to listen in to ISIL communications: “As we listen to them, we know that the impact of the precision strikes is demoralizing to them.”¹⁰ There also have been press reports that the U.S. conducted a recent airstrike targeted at al-

⁶ Ben Hubbard, “ISIS Wave of Might Is Turning Into Ripple,” *New York Times*, November 5, 2014.

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ Eric Marrapodi, “General to ISIS: We Can Hear You,” *CNN*, November 6, 2014.

¹⁰ Ibid.

Baghdadi, the leader of ISIL, in the vicinity of Mosul. The press has reported that al-Baghdadi may have been wounded in this strike; however, the military is still assessing this strike.¹¹

Even with the context of the successes that GEN Austin highlighted in his speech, he also stated that ISIL “still has the capability to continue in the fight. I think the question is how soon can we get the Iraqi military up to speed to do what they need to do to hold those gains.”¹²

SYRIA TRAIN AND EQUIP

On September 19th, the House passed the Continuing Resolution (CR), H. J. Res. 124. Included within the CR was an amendment to train and equip the vetted elements of the moderate Syrian opposition.

Since this vote, the Department has moved forward with the planning for this “train and equip” effort. Such planning has included finalizing locations and securing agreements with host countries in the region, establishing the procedures for vetting the Syrian opposition, providing guidance to Syrian opposition elements on the logistics for this effort, and coordinating within the interagency on the details of the program.

The analysts have debated the merits and the precise goals of the Syria train and equip program. Is it focused on just ISIL, or will it also focus on the Assad regime? Additionally, the questions have arisen regarding how this effort fits into the overall strategy for Syria and the sequencing of such an effort within the overall military campaign. For example, over the past few months, Assad has focused his military power on al-Nusrah and ISIL to destroy the military threat facing his regime before taking on the political one. Moderate Syrian opposition groups were, in turn, given breathing room.¹³ However, Coalition airstrikes against ISIL have allowed Assad to re-allocate resources. He has pulled attacks away from ISIL, relying on Coalition airstrikes to foil ISIL advances, and has re-focused the totality of his military resources towards the Syrian opposition (which includes elements that the U.S. may desire to train within the train and equip program).

The committee has received a status report that provides further details on the progress on this program to date.

THE COALITION

¹¹ Holly Yan and Susnana Capelouto, “After Airstrikes, Questions Abound Over Fate of ISIS Leader,” *CNN*, November 10, 2014.

¹² *Ibid.*

¹³ Anne Barnard, *Syrian Forces Are Seen Stepping Up Attacks on Rebels as U.S. Sets Sights on ISIS*. Sept. 17, 2014

The Administration has highlighted that there are 60 nations who are part of the Coalition against ISIL, offering various degrees of participation – from directly participating in combat operations to providing resources to offering training support.¹⁴ There are fundamental tensions within the Coalition about the goals of the military effort. Some Coalition members want to see Assad go, others want to focus just on ISIL, and still others want to see the break-up of portions of Iraq and Syria. This has created a complex chess game of aligning Coalition actors to various segments of the effort.

In Syria, Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates (UAE), Jordan, Bahrain, and Qatar have participated in the military operations. On October 2nd, the Turkish parliament voted to authorize its military to join the fight against the Islamic State in Iraq and Syria (ISIS). Turkish lawmakers approved action in a 298-98 vote.¹⁵ While the country had previously pledged to join the Coalition, it has not yet conducted any military actions.¹⁶ The authorization reportedly allows the Turkish military to enter both Iraq and Syria to fight ISIL and would allow Coalition troops to travel through Turkey. However, there continues to be friction between what the Government of Turkey is willing to do, and what the United States would like Turkey to do in terms of allowing certain types of armed aircraft to fly from Turkish bases and the employment of Turkey's armed forces. The *Wall Street Journal* reported that senior U.S. officials remain "less than satisfied" with Turkey's contribution and as a major NATO partner they need to "step up to the plate."¹⁷ Turkey would like the mission in Syria to be expanded beyond ISIL – to address the Assad regime. To date, the Administration does not support this expansion of the mission in Syria. It remains to be seen whether the Government of Turkey will employ its military in Syria given the Coalition's exclusive focus on ISIL at this point. In his speech at the Atlantic Council, on the topic of Turkey and the Coalition, GEN Austin stated: "Turkey has to get in the game here obviously. It's got a set of concerns, and we need to be mindful of that." GEN Austin also said that the Coalition would "get it done" with or without more support from the Turks: "The more access and over flight rights we can get the better off we'll be."¹⁸

The Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan has been an important part of the anti-ISIL coalition. However, Jordan's role has been either defensive or administering humanitarian aid to the refugees from the regional conflicts. The Jordanian Air Force possesses approximately 60 F-16s, some of which have accompanied US planes conducting strikes in Iraq and Syria, including in the vicinity of Kobane. Media reports also suggest that Jordanian SOF assisted U.S. troops in the failed attempt to rescue American journalist James Foley. There is little likelihood of Jordanian ground support because many Jordanians likely fear that an overt Jordanian offensive

¹⁴ "Remarks by the President After Meeting with Chiefs of Defense," *The White House*, October 14, 2014.

¹⁵ Laura Smith-Spark, Chelsea J. Carter and Gul Tuysuz, "Turkish lawmakers OK military action against ISIS," *CNN*, October 2, 2014.

¹⁶ Jesse Byrnes, "WH: Turkey to Join Coalition Against ISIS," *The Hill*, September 24, 2014.

¹⁷ Joe Parkinson, *In Reversal, Turkey to Open Passage to Kobani for Kurdish Fighters*. *Wall Street Journal*

¹⁸ Eric Marrapodi, "General to ISIS: We Can Hear You," *CNN*, November 6, 2014.

could make the kingdom an ISIL target. Jordan currently hosts over 600,000 refugees, mostly from Syria and Iraq.

In Iraq, Australia, Belgium, Britain, Canada, the Czech Republic, Denmark, France, Germany, Italy, the Netherlands, Albania, Estonia, and Hungary have either directly joined the military operations or have offered support to military operations through resources. Also, the UK and French parliaments have provided authorizations for the use of military force in Iraq. Certain Coalition nations are offering training assistance to re-build and re-train the ISF.

RECENT EVENTS IN THE MILITARY CAMPAIGN

Apaches Used in Airstrikes

On October 4th, CENTCOM stated that they employed Army Apache attack helicopters against ISIL targets for the first time near Fallujah, Iraq.¹⁹ While still operating from the air, the use of Apache attack helicopters demonstrates an evolution of the purpose of this asset in Iraq – from crisis response to direct combat – and is a reflection of how close U.S. troops are to ground combat in Iraq – increasing the risk to U.S. troops.

Kobani Offensive

Over October 18-19, the United States began airdropping supplies to the Kurdish forces fighting ISIL in Kobani, Syria. The *New York Times* reported that 27 shipments of “ammunition, small arms, and medical supplies,” which were provided by Iraqi Kurdish authorities and airdropped into Kobani by U.S. C-130s.²⁰

On October 20th, Turkey announced that it would allow Kurdish Peshmerga to cross Turkish territory in order to reinforce Syrian Kurds in Kobani. Peshmerga fighters crossed the border into Kobani on October 31 and began manning heavy artillery and weaponry in support of Syrian Kurdish fighters.²¹

U.S. backed rebels routed by Jabhat al-Nusra (JN)

JN captured significant amounts of territory from the Syria Revolutionaries’ Front, a moderate Syrian opposition group, in late October and early November, and captured bases held by the Hazm movement.²² Both were backed by the U.S. and other regional powers, and Harakaat Hazm had received U.S. anti-tank missiles along with other weapons. The province taken is seen as one of the last bastions of the Free Syrian Army in the north.²³ This outcome for

¹⁹ Paul McCleary, *US Army Apache Helos Used in Strikes Against Islamic State*. Defense News, October 5, 2014.

²⁰ Eric Schmidt, *U.S. Airdrops Weapons and Supplies to Kurds Fighting in Kobani*. New York Times, October 20, 2014.

²¹ Omer Berberogly, *Peshmerga, Syrian rebels battle Islamic State in besieged Kobani*. Reuters, Nov. 4, 2014

²² Mary Casey, *Nusra Fighters Seize Stronghold of U.S.-Backed Rebels in Syria*. Foreign Policy, Nov. 3, 2014

²³ Liz Sly, *U.S.-backed Syria rebels routed by fighters linked to al-Qaeda*. The Washington Post, Nov. 2, 2014

JN illustrates the potential risks of an incremental approach in this type of effort. There can be risk when the U.S. offers lethal assistance, but not enough to respond militarily against the enemies on a battlefield.

U.S. strikes against other extremist groups

Reports indicate that U.S. officials are considering expanding the airstrike campaign to include targeting al-Nusra out of concern about their recent advances against moderate opposition groups.²⁴ On November 5th, the U.S. struck a compound controlled by Ahrar al-Sham, an extremist group that has close relations with JN, and compounds controlled by JN in Syria, confirming that airstrikes are now targeting an array of extremist groups.²⁵ This expansion of the strategy and operational approach could risk compromising the Syrian opposition's perception of the U.S. military's effort. Without action to stymie Assad's forces, could the U.S. be creating space and opportunity for the Assad regime to advance against the opposition, which could further perceptions that the U.S. is deliberately helping the Assad regime? Such a perception among the Syrian opposition could make it more difficult to recruit Syrian opposition fighters for the U.S. Syria train and equip program and for western-backed groups to operate effectively against ISIL or in the larger conflict.

ISF Operations

The United States is working with ISF to institute a long-term campaign; however, such action will not begin in earnest for several months. The offensive will need to balance the current capabilities of the Iraqi army against the need to make significant territorial gains against ISIL.²⁶ The United States is also talking to allied nations about putting non-American troops on the ground and establishing a training and equipping program to Anbar Province. Both steps would help to reinforce the ISF and support airstrikes against ISIL.²⁷ Before such a major offensive takes place, the ISF is working to secure important infrastructure and expel ISIL from the area around the Baiji oil refinery.²⁸ While ISF have driven ISIL out of some towns and areas, these offensives have required upwards of 10,000 Shia militiamen and Iranian support to these Shia elements to supplement the ISF. These operations have also involved evacuating civilians and reportedly leveling the towns. Similar future operations, on a larger scale, risk leaving Sunni areas uninhabitable and could exacerbate sectarian divisions.²⁹

ISIL Killings of Sunni tribes

²⁴ Karen DeYoung, *U.S. officials consider striking another militant group in Syria, Jabhat al-Nusra*. The Washington Post, Nov. 3, 2014

²⁵ *Activists: US Strike Hits Syrian Rebel Compound*. Associated Press, Nov. 6, 2014

²⁶ Karen DeYoung, *U.S., Iraq planning offensive by Iraqi forces to reclaim territory from Islamic State*. Washington Post, Oct. 21, 2014

²⁷ Andrew Tilghman, *U.S. war planners focus on advisers in Anbar*. Military Times, Oct. 24, 2014

²⁸ *Iraqi army inches towards Baiji oil refinery*. Al Jazeera, Oct. 31, 2014

²⁹ Loveday Morris, *Iraq's victory over militants in Sunni town underlines challenges government faces*. The Washington Post, Oct. 29, 2014

Sunni tribes have both clashed and cooperated with ISIL. For example, the Sunni tribe, Jaysh Rijal at-Tariqa an-Naqshabandiya (JRTN), cooperated with ISIL extensively; but, in May, ISIL executed eight members for refusing to swear allegiance to al-Baghdadi, the leader of ISIL.³⁰ In June, JRTN and ISIL fought again; this time over oil tankers, which left 17 dead.³¹ ISIL continues to assassinate leaders of factions that had allied themselves with ISIL but refused to swear allegiance to al-Baghdadi.³² In August, the Shaitat tribe rose against ISIL after ISIL violated a non-interference agreement. The tribe was slaughtered.³³ Other Sunni tribes rebelling against ISIL have suffered the same fate. The Sunni Abu Nimr tribe also attempted to rise against ISIL and ally with the ISF.³⁴ In response, more than 200 members of the Sunni Abu Nimr tribe were discovered in mass graves, victim of close-range gunshots. ISIL has continued to kill members of the tribe, and the death toll rose above 300 by early November.³⁵ ISIL's current appeal is that it has both 'established a caliphate' and is 'purifying the society it controls. Will ISIL's approach of killing the population that it needs support from could backfire against it over time?

ISIL's Difficulties with Governance

Recent reporting from inside Mosul has indicated that ISIL is not effectively governing the city. The economy is suffering, the prices of goods have tripled, and schools are unable to teach or administer testing. Even essential services like garbage pickup are not provided. This has led to a growing anger at ISIL.³⁶ There are also indications that the population within the territory of ISIL control are increasing their cooperation with Coalition and ISF forces. For example, in Diyala Province, tips from residents have assisted ISF in cutting supply lines and killing local ISIL leaders.³⁷

Iraqi Government Mobilization of Sunni Tribes

After meeting with Anbar tribal leaders on October 28th, Prime Minister Abadi agreed to the creation of a 30,000-strong Sunni volunteer force from Anbar to combat ISIL, which could become the Iraqi National Guard. This initiative could inject a pro-government, Sunni counterweight into the current context in Iraq. Assembling such a force could increase Sunni participation within the government. However, if Abadi fails to assemble the force, or if it is improperly trained or managed, it could drive sectarian wedges deeper. This outcome is plausible given the ISF's cooperation with Iranian IRGC-Quds forces and Shia militias.

³⁰ Mohammad Shafiq, *Daash execute eight "Naqshbandi" refused to swear allegiance to Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi northern Salahuddin*. Alsumaria News, May 31, 2014

³¹ *Iraq crisis: Isis allies 'turn on jihadists' as 17 killed in clashes near Kirkuk*. The Telegraph, June 21, 2014

³² Hassan al-Obaidi, *Life under ISIL caliphate: assassinating yesterday's allies*. Al-Shorfa, July 28, 2014

³³ Waleed Abu al-Khair, *Sunni tribe rises up against ISIL in Syria*. Al-Shorfa, Aug. 14, 2014

³⁴ Richard Sisk, *Hagel: US Faces Setbacks and Complications in ISIS Fight*. Military.com, Oct. 30, 2014

³⁵ Ben Hubbard, *ISIS Wave of Might Is Turning Into Ripple*. New York Times, Nov. 5, 2014

³⁶ Mohammad Moslaw et al. *Citizens of Mosul endure economic collapse and repression under Isis rule*. The Guardian, Oct. 27, 2014

³⁷ Ben Hubbard, *ISIS Wave of Might Is Turning Into Ripple*. New York Times, Nov. 5, 2014

Use of Chlorine Gas in Iraq and Syria

The Syrian Government has used chlorine gas to supplement its fighting forces and overcome manpower or capability deficits. At least 16 such attacks have taken place since August 2014 –largely concentrated around the Damascus suburbs.³⁸ The Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons has criticized the systematic use of chlorine gas in northern Syria. In late October, ISIL used chlorine gas to attack a group of police officers in Iraq. This was the first confirmed case of chlorine use by ISIL, though there have been other reports of chemical attacks on Iraqi bases, and AQI led a string of chlorine attacks in 2006-2007. Reports indicate that ISIL gained access to the chlorine from water-treatment plants.³⁹

AQ-ISIL Cooperation

While Al Qaeda core disassociated itself with ISIL in early 2014 due to continued actions in Syria and infringement on JN territory; on September 11, 2014, AQAP and AQIM released a joint statement calling on factions in Iraq and Syria to unite against western powers.⁴⁰ AQAP expressed direct support for ISIL in an online statement in October.⁴¹ In fact, in October, al-Qaeda core attempted to extend an olive branch to end infighting within Syria and concentrate on merging operations to conduct attacks against western targets.⁴² Such statements indicate that the military success or international prominence of ISIL is influencing leadership of the global jihadist movement. Will this evolution open new fundraising routes for both groups and allow a streamlining of force structure while re-directing the time and money the groups spent fighting each other towards global attacks? Would it allow al-Qaeda core to focus on global attacks against the west rather than worrying about JN/ ISIL clashes?

REGIONAL SITUATION

General John Allen, the Special Presidential Envoy for the Global Coalition to Counter ISIL, is one of the key figures coordinating the Coalition regional effort against ISIL. General Allen has been traveling around the region to secure support for the counter-ISIL effort as well as help coordinate that effort.

Lebanon

The war in Syria is enabling the rise of extremists and Islamist groups whose interests and goals may prove threatening to Lebanon. Hezbollah has engaged in combat in Syria in

³⁸ Jared Ferris, *Alleged Chemical Weapons Use in Syria Since August 19, 2014*. Institute for the Study of War, October 2014

³⁹ Loveday Morris, *Jihadists Launched Chemical Assault*. Washington Post, Oct. 24, 2014

⁴⁰ Heather Saul, *Isis: al-Qaeda branches urge militants to 'stop the infighting' and unite against US-led coalition targeting Islamic State*. The Independent, Sept. 17, 2014

⁴¹ *Yemen's Al-Qaeda Express Support for ISIS against "Crusade."* Al-Alam, Oct. 17, 2014

⁴² Deb Riechmann and Bassem Mroue, *Analysts: Al-Qaida still offers olive branch to IS*. AP, Oct. 29, 2014

support Assad. Lebanese Christians and other religious minorities in both countries are concerned about almost any of the possible outcomes in Syria, including an Assad regime victory or the possible empowerment of Sunni Islamist groups in Syria. The conflict in Syria has destabilized Lebanon as more than 1 million refugees, mostly Sunni Syrians, have fled to Lebanon. It has become a transit point and staging ground for both supporters and opponents of the Assad regime. ISIL began attacking Lebanese targets in June of 2014⁴³ in response to the pro-Assad Hezbollah presence in Syria. Attacks increased in intensity through October, with multiple border clashes between JN, ISIL, and Hezbollah.⁴⁴ On October 23, 2014, Lebanon announced that it would not be accepting any more refugees from the Syrian conflict, as it has already taken on a refugee burden equivalent to more than a quarter of its population.⁴⁵

Parts of northwestern Lebanon have faced serious sectarian violence as militants infiltrate refugee camps in Sunni towns and use the opportunities afforded to shell Shia communities. Many of the victims in towns under attack recognize that such actions are meant to incite sectarian violence, and have refrained from armed action, but tensions are mounting.⁴⁶ Also, in Aarsal, Lebanon, there continues to be fighting between the Lebanese Armed Forces (LAF) and jihadist. Aarsal could become a key new front of the fight for ISIL if the LAF is unable to repel the ISIL assaults.⁴⁷

In a bid for further ties, both Saudi Arabia and Iran offered competing aid packages to the Lebanese military. The Saudi offer would promote two main goals – allowing Saudis to have a larger hand in the army and enhancing state force capabilities to counter Hezbollah. Iran is looking to bolster Hezbollah through the armed forces, enhancing the Lebanese army’s ability to defend any attacks or terrorism on Lebanese territory and giving Hezbollah more freedom to intervene in Syria.⁴⁸

Iran

Even though both the U.S. and Iran would like to see ISIL destroyed, both countries have very different endstates in mind for Syria and Iraq. While senior-level talks between the U.S. and Iran are held regularly and are no longer confined to nuclear talks, the U.S. has kept Iran out of any formal anti-ISIL coalition.⁴⁹ Also, reportedly, President Obama sent a letter to Iran’s Supreme Leader, Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, last month in which he highlighted the countries’ shared interest in beating ISIL. *CNN* has reported that the Administration has gone through the

⁴³ Michael Pizzi, *As ISIL surges, could Lebanon be the next domino to fall?* Al Jazeera, June 30, 2014

⁴⁴ *Hezbollah and Nusra clash on Lebanon border.* Al Jazeera, Oct. 5, 2014

⁴⁵ *Lebanon to Bar Syrian Refugees.* New York Times, Oct. 23, 2014

⁴⁶ Anne Barnard, *Sectarian Wedge Pushes From Syria Into Lebanon.* New York Times, Oct. 27, 2014

⁴⁷ “Army Clashes with Militants Near Aarsal,” *The Daily Star*, October 5, 2014.

⁴⁸ Hugh Naylor, *Rivals Tehran, Riyadh pledge billions to Lebanon’s army.* The Washington Post, Nov.4, 2014

⁴⁹ CRS Report R32048 “Iran: U.S. Concerns and Policy Responses,” by Kenneth Katzman, October 1, 2014. <http://www.crs.gov/pdfloader/R43333>.

Iraqis to communicate with Iran.⁵⁰ The media reporting states that the conversations did not include taking joint military action against ISIL, but they have been seen as necessary to avoid conflict between the United States and Iranian operations in Iraq, in particular.⁵¹

Iran continues to have significant influence in Iraq. Iraq's new prime minister, Haider al-Abadi, appointed, and received approval from the Iraqi parliament, Mohammed Ghabban, a Shiite and former member of the Badr Corps. Iran also supported this appointment, and Ghabban will likely serve Iran's interests in Iraq – particularly with respect to the Shia militias within the ISF.⁵² Also, reportedly, Iran has the IRGC-Quds force on the ground in Iraq and are supporting the Shia militias in operations in key Shia areas in northern Iraq.

In Syria, Iran appears to be willing to continue to support the Assad regime via the IRGC-Quds force and Lebanese Hezbollah. It is unclear how far Iran will go to support the Assad regime, but no event to date has changed Iran's policy to support the Assad regime.

Between Iraq and Syria, and other global efforts of the IRGC-Quds force, Iran is stretching its operations and potentially the ability to support such efforts in Iraq and Syria. Analysts have also highlighted the interplay of U.S.-Iranian interests with the on-going negotiations over Iran's nuclear program and efforts against ISIL. Some reports suggest that the U.S. is leveraging U.S. efforts against ISIL in the Iran nuclear negotiations. Other report suggest that if a comprehensive agreement is not achieved and the Joint Plan of Action (JPOA) is not extended, then U.S. forces could be at greater risk on the ground in Iraq from Shia militias.

FY15 OCO BUDGET AMENDMENT

On November 10th, the President provided an amendment to the FY15 OCO budget request. The amendment is for an additional \$5.6 billion for OCO activities “to degrade and ultimately defeat ISIL – including military operations as part of Operation Inherent Resolve.

Specifically, the \$5 billion DoD portion of the budget amendment would be for the purpose of:

- Sustaining personnel forward deployed to the Middle East to provide training, advice, and assistance to partner security forces engaged in the fight against ISIL;
- Providing forces with enablers to support operations, especially the intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance (ISR) platforms and support that are essential to conduct comprehensive counterterrorism operations;

⁵⁰ Elise Labott and Jim Sciutto, “U.S. Opens Channels with Iran over ISIS,” *CNN*, November 6, 2014.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*

⁵² Loveday Morris, “Appointment of Iraq's New Interior Minister Opens Door to Militia and Iranian Influence,” *Washington Post*, October 18, 2014.

- Replenishing or replacing munitions expended while conducting airstrikes against ISIL, including from Air Force and Navy platforms; and
- Financing operations and maintenance costs for air, ground, and naval operations, including: flying hours; ship steaming days; and fuel, supplies, and repair parts.

This budget amendment would also request additional authorities, including:

Iraq Train and Equip Fund (ITEF): The IETF request includes \$1.6 billion for working with Coalition partners and providing the resources and authorities to develop and support Iraqi national security forces, including Kurdish forces, as they confront ISIL in Iraq. U.S. military advisors would train and advise Iraqi forces, including Kurdish forces, to improve their ability to plan, lead, and conduct operations against ISIL. ITEF would provide the resources to help reconstitute and develop security forces.

Coalition Support Fund (CSF) (authority only): Expands existing CSF authority to reimburse key cooperating nations for logistical, military, and other support, including access, provided to United States military and stability operations in Iraq. These funds will provide specialized training and procure supplies and specialized equipment, on a non-reimbursable basis, to coalition forces supporting U.S. military and stability operations in Afghanistan and Iraq.

Lift and Sustain (authority only): Increases and expands existing Lift and Sustain authority to provide supplies, services, transportation, including airlift and sealift, and other logistical support to coalition forces supporting military and stability operations in Iraq when undertaking activities to counter the ISIL.

ADDITIONAL READING AND RESOURCES

- http://www.defense.gov/home/features/2014/0814_iraq/
- Institute for the Study of War Iraq and Syria
- Christopher Blanchard and Amy Belasco, *Proposed Train and Equip Authorities for Syria: In Brief*. CRS, Oct. 27, 2014
- Rukmini Callimachi, *The Horror Before the Beheadings*. New York Times, Oct. 25, 2014
- Kenneth Katzman et al. *The “Islamic State” Crisis and U.S. Policy*. CRS, Oct. 22, 2014
- Mathew Weed, *A New Authorization for Use of Military Force Against the Islamic State: Comparison of Current Proposals in Brief*. CRS, Oct. 21, 2014
- Jim Zanotti, *Turkey-U.S. Cooperation Against the “Islamic State”: A Unique Dynamic?* CRS, Oct. 21, 2014
- John Rollins and Liana Rosen, *U.S. Citizens Kidnapped by the Islamic State*. CRS, Oct. 17, 2014
- Margaret Mikyung Lee, *(No) Papers Please: No Passports for U.S. “Foreign Fighters.”* CRS, Oct. 7, 2014
- Secretary of Defense Chuck Hagel, *Testimony: the Administration’s ISIL Strategy*. House Armed Services Committee, Sept. 18, 2014
- Christopher Blanchard et al, *Armed Conflict in Syria: Overview and U.S. Response*. CRS, Sept. 17, 2014
- Testimony by former HASC Chairman Duncan Hunter, Mr. Max Boot, Dr. Stephen Biddle, and Mr. Brian Fishman, *Security Situation in Iraq and Syria: U.S. Policy Options and Implications for the Region*, House Armed Services Committee, July 29, 2014.
- *Hearing Memo, Security Situation in Iraq and Syria: U.S. Policy Options and Implications for the Region*, House Armed Services Committee July 28, 2014.
- *Iraq Crisis and U.S. Policy*. CRS, July 21, 2014.

- Ambassador James Jeffrey, *The Rise of ISIL: Iraq and Beyond*. Testimony with the *House Subcommittee on Terrorism, Nonproliferation, and Trade, and the Subcommittee on the Middle East and North Africa*, July 15, 2014
- Michael Eisenstadt, *The Rise of ISIL: Iraq and Beyond*. Testimony with the *House Subcommittee on Terrorism, Nonproliferation, and Trade, and the Subcommittee on the Middle East and North Africa*, July 15, 2014;
- Max Boot, Meghan O’Sullivan, Richard Haass, Stephen Biddle, Transcript from panel discussion entitled: *What to do about Iraq*. Council on Foreign Relations, June 18, 2014;

SUGGESTED QUESTIONS

- Historically the U.S. has targeted leadership in order to significantly weaken an organization: how effective would such a strategy be against ISIL, and does its continued institution-building and governance play any role in such a strategy's viability?
- Is an Iraq held together by a tenuous political coalition significantly more stable than a divided state? How long is it likely to take before we see stability in the region?
- Would conduct of counterterrorism operations against ISIL provide strategic space and strengthen the moderate Sunnis in Syria and Iraq? What level of U.S. counterterrorism engagement and forces would be required to create and sustain this strategic space?
- ISIL is beginning to establish cells and operations within neighboring countries- how can we effectively assist our partners in the region to prevent ISIL's expansion, without opening up new recruitment avenues for the group?
- We have already seen infighting between the ISIL and other Syrian rebel groups: exploiting these differences could be a useful strategy in hampering ISIL. How can the U.S. and the Iraqi government work to do this with the aim of fracturing the insurgency?
- What role are Shia militias currently playing on the ground in Iraq? How are the Iraqi security forces cooperating with Shia militias on the ground? What degree of control does the ISF have over Shia militias on the ground?
- What steps does the Iraqi government need to take to facilitate reconciliation with alienated Sunni tribes in Anbar province and other Sunni majority areas in order to reduce political support for Sunni insurgent groups?
- What is the U.S. objective with respect to ISIL?
- The President's speech called for defeating ISIL through specific military actions in both Iraq and Syria. Assuming those military actions are effective, Iraq and Syria are each likely to need an architecture of responsive, effective governance, accepted by their people, to preserve and protect security.
 - How important is responsive, accountable governance, accepted by the people, for protecting security gains, and thus U.S. interests, in Iraq and in Syria?
 - What opportunities and tools does the U.S. Government have, with Allies and partners, to help shape those political processes? How important is U.S. engagement, to help ensure the success of those political processes?

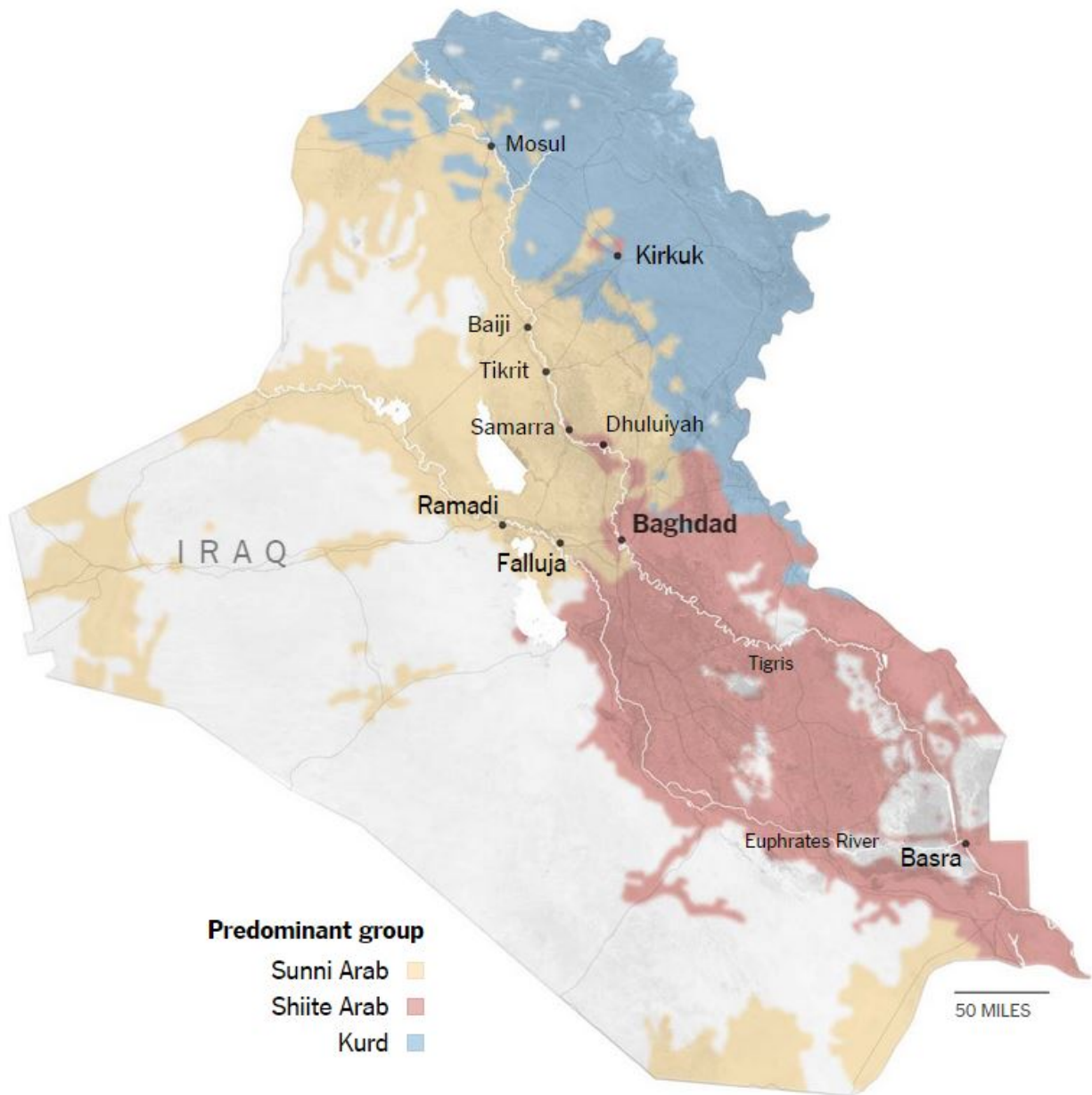
- The inter-linked developments in Iraq and Syria do not take place in isolation from the rest of the world. Major players around the world – friends and foes, state and non-state actors, populations – are watching to gauge U.S. policy, intent, will, and staying power.
 - What signals do we believe our newly announced approaches toward Iraq and Syria are sending to friend and potential foes around the world? How are those audiences reconciling the new approaches with our policies and practices of the last several years?
 - How important are perceptions of U.S. leadership regarding ISIL toward future U.S. ability to exercise power and influence on the world stage? How important is it that we protect that ability?

- In Iraq, the President’s approach calls for an enhanced training and advisory mission for the Iraqi Security Forces (ISF), in addition to airstrikes. U.S. and coalition partners conducted a train-and-advise mission in Iraq for almost a decade, and reporting toward the end of that effort typically suggested that the mission was succeeding. So, as we renew these efforts, it is important that the U.S. and international partners hold a shared view of the successes and also the shortcomings of those earlier efforts. Many observers suggest that one shortcoming was the failure, before coalition forces departed, to help Iraqis sufficiently develop the systems they would need in order to sustain security gains over time – logistics, personnel, resourcing against requirements. In turn, many observers and practitioners also stress that the core problem was that, after coalition forces departed, Prime Minister Maliki manipulated the ISF to maximize the loyalty of the ISF to himself.
 - How sufficient an explanation for the ISF’s battlefield losses against ISIL is political manipulation by Prime Minister Maliki?
 - What gaps in the ISF, if any, did previous U.S. and coalition train-and-advise efforts in Iraq leave? In particular, how much progress was made in the development of Iraqi security institutions?
 - To what extent should renewed train-and-advise efforts mirror those of the past decade? In what important respects if any should they differ?

- By almost any measure, Syria is a far more pernicious problem than Iraq – a multi-dimensional chess game with an array of internal and external, state and non-state actors, with various combinations of overlapping and conflicting interests. “Success” would require a political endstate for which there is currently little or no foundation, and a path toward that endstate that might involve short-term, instrumental cooperation with other actors who hold very different views.
 - What is the U.S. strategic vision for a political endstate in Syria that would preserve and protect stability, and thus U.S. interests? How broadly shared would that vision have to be to give it good chances of being realized?

- What sort of a contest for power and influence do we anticipate among other major stakeholders within Syria, and interested external parties, as the influence and reach of ISIL is reduced or eliminated?

APPENDIX A: POLITICAL MAPS OF IRAQ AND SYRIA

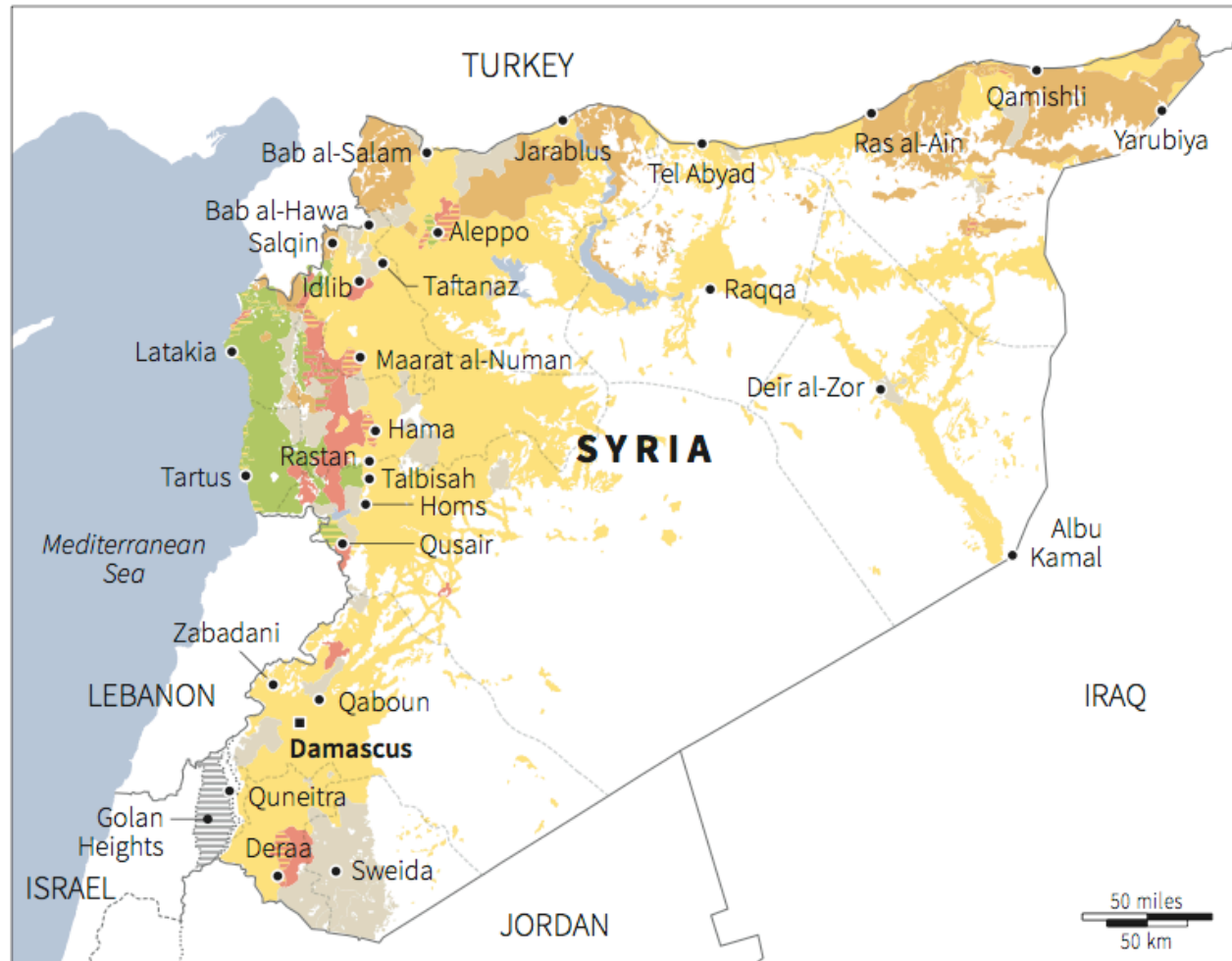


Syria's ethnic composition

Percentage	59.1	11.8	9.3	8.9	10.9
	Arabs	Alawites	Levantines	Kurds	Others
	Sunni Muslim	Arab-speaking	Arab-speaking Christians	Mostly Sunni Muslim	

Geographic distribution

Colours reflect ethnic groups above

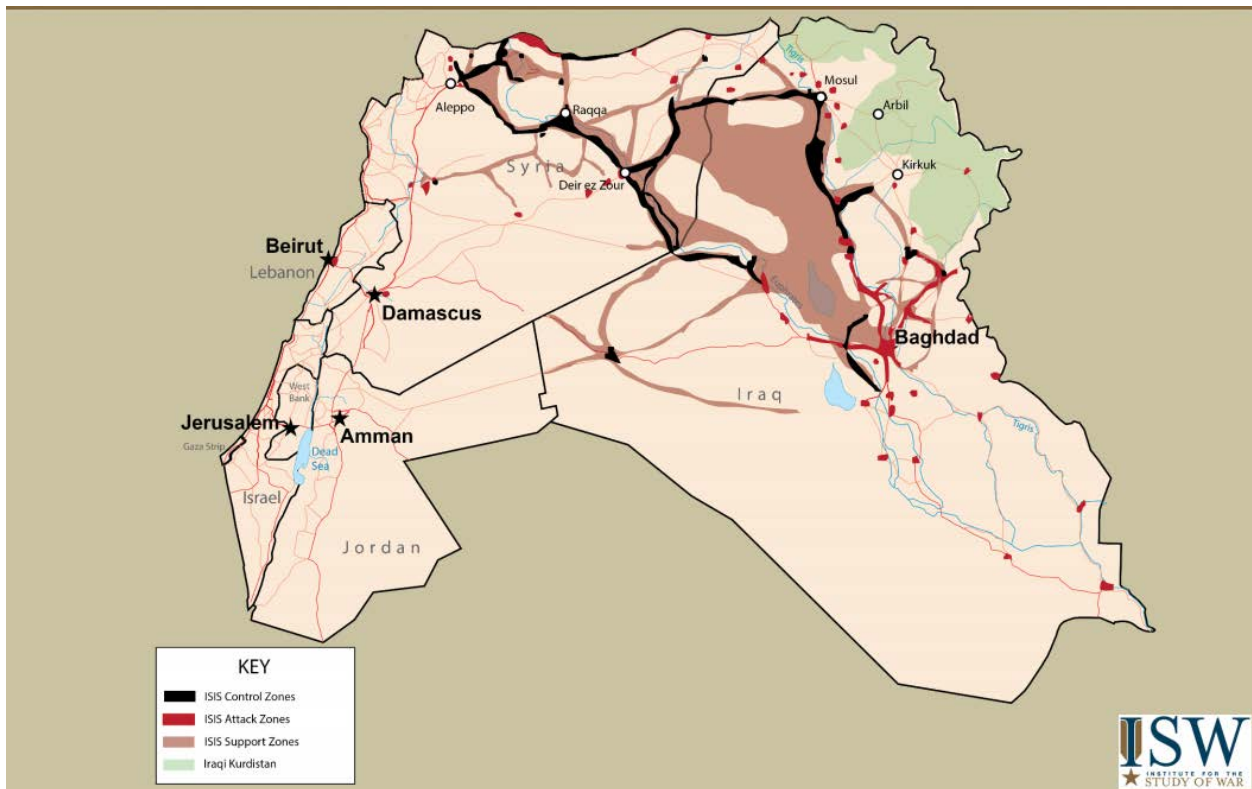


Source: M. Izady - Gulf/2000 Project; Columbia University

Staff, 29/08/2013

REUTERS

APPENDIX B: MAP OF THE ISLAMIC STATE'S TERRITORIAL CONTROL



Institute for the Study of War – October 30, 2014

APPENDIX C: WAR POWERS RESOLUTIONS ON THE CAMPAIGN AGAINST ISIL

Date	Arena	Action	Authority	Notes
9.23.14	Syria	A “series of strikes in Syria against elements of al-Qa’ida known as the Khorasan Group”	Article II 2001 AUMF	1 st strikes in Syria 1 st AUMF citation
9.23.14	Iraq & Syria	475 additional US forces to Iraq, a determination that is appropriate to provide support to “select elements of the Iraqi security forces,” including the Peshmerga, and a “systematic campaign of airstrikes and other necessary actions” against ISIL	Article II 2002 Iraq AUMF 2001 AUMF	1 st strikes in Syria 1 st AUMF citation
9.8.14	Iraq	Targeted airstrikes against ISIL “in the vicinity of the Haditha Dam in support of Iraqi forces”	Article II	
9.5.14	Iraq	350 additional US forces to “provide support and security for U.S. personnel and the U.S. Embassy in Baghdad”	Article II	
9.1.14	Iraq	Targeted airstrikes against ISIL to support humanitarian assistance in Amirli	Article II	
8.17.14	Iraq	Airstrikes targeting ISIL “to support operations by Iraqi forces to recapture the Mosul Dam”	Article II	
8.8.14	Iraq	Airstrikes to “protect American personnel in Iraq” by stopping the advance of ISIL on Erbil “and to help forces in Iraq as they fight to break the siege of Mount Sinjar”	Article II	1st strikes against ISIL in Iraq
6.30.14	Iraq	Approximately 200 additional US forces “to reinforce security at the U.S. Embassy, its support facilities, and the Baghdad International Airport”	Article II	
6.26.14	Iraq	Increased intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance of ISIL, along with “approximately 300 additional U.S. Armed Forces personnel in Iraq” to assess how best to train, advise, and support Iraqi security forces “and to establish joint operations centers” for coordination and intelligence sharing	Article II	First explicit mention of ISIL
6.16.14	Iraq	Approximately 275 US forces deploying to Iraq “to provide support and security for U.S. personnel and the U.S. Embassy in Baghdad”	Article II	

