



**Joel D. Rayburn**

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Joel Rayburn is a specialist in national security, foreign policy, and Middle East affairs. He is a retired U.S. Army officer, former diplomat, and historian. During his career of more than three decades in public service, he combined military, academic, and diplomatic roles in a variety of assignments related mainly to the Middle East and South Asia. From January to July, 2021, he served as a special advisor for Middle East affairs to Senator Bill Hagerty (R-TN), a member of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee. From July 2018 to January 2021, Rayburn was the U.S. Special Envoy for Syria, overseeing U.S. diplomatic activities concerning Syria and supervising more than 100 diplomats and civil servants across the Middle East and Europe.

Before joining the State Department, Rayburn served 26 years as a U.S. Army officer, with his final assignment as senior director for Iran, Iraq, Syria, and Lebanon on the National Security Council staff in 2017-2018.

In his academic work, Rayburn currently directs the American Center for Levant Studies, a non-profit research organization, while also serving as a research fellow at the New America Foundation and a visiting fellow at the Hoover Institution.

Rayburn is the author of the two-volume study *The U.S. Army in the Iraq War* (2018) as well as a political study of the Iraqi civil war, *Iraq After America: Strongmen, Sectarians, Resistance* (2014).

Rayburn holds an MA in History from Texas A&M University (2002) and an MS in Strategic Studies from the National War College (2013). He hails from Crescent, Oklahoma and lives with his family in Washington, DC. He tweets at [@joel\\_rayburn](https://twitter.com/joel_rayburn).