

WRITTEN TESTIMONY ON “SECURING THE PEACE AFTER THE FALL OF ISIL”

HOUSE ARMED SERVICES COMMITTEE

SUBCOMMITTEE ON OVERSIGHT AND INVESTIGATIONS

Tuesday, October 3, 2017

Chairwoman Hartzler, Ranking Member Moulton, Subcommittee Members:

Thank you for inviting Department witnesses to testify here today, and thank you for your steadfast support for the men and women of the Department of Defense—military and civilian alike—who serve and defend our country all over the world.

Our focus this afternoon will be on Iraq, and we are pleased to discuss the Department of Defense’s efforts to enable Iraq to achieve and maintain stability following the recent liberation of Mosul. The Iraqi Security Forces led the way in defeating ISIS in Mosul, liberating that city and freeing its people. The Iraqi Security Forces carried their winning momentum to the next ISIS stronghold in Tal Afar, delivering a swift victory there. One year ago, virtually all of Ninewa Governorate was controlled by ISIS. In late August, Baghdad announced the complete liberation of Ninewa Governorate. Every day, Iraqi Security Forces fight to return their country to the Iraqi people, and out of the hands of ISIS terrorists. As Iraqi Security Forces maintain the initiative and continue to bring the fight to ISIS, they are backed by strong Iraqi leadership in Baghdad and unwavering support from a 73-member global Coalition.

Although we are pleased that ISIS’s military defeat is within sight, we recognize that the military effort is only one part of the Defeat ISIS campaign. The key to preventing the re-emergence in Iraq of ISIS, or any other violent extremist organization, is effective and inclusive governance. For this to develop, the United States and our Coalition partners must continue to work by, with, and through the Government of Iraq to consolidate military gains and stabilize liberated areas. This approach places the military instrument of power in a supporting and enabling role. To empower the possibility for long-term peace in Iraq, the United States and our Coalition partners are bolstering the Government of Iraq, enabling their security services, and promoting local reconciliation amongst the Iraqi people. In the fight to defeat ISIS, we saw unprecedented cooperation between the Kurdish Peshmerga forces and the Iraqi Security Forces – fighting and taking casualties to achieve a common goal for Iraq. The recent Kurdish referendum on independence presents a challenge to this cooperation, but hopefully this can be overcome.

The military defeat of ISIS is only the first step in a long-term commitment to rid the world of violent extremist organizations. The seeds of the next extremist resurgence lie in the rubble of the Defeat ISIS campaign. Following the defeat of ISIS's physical caliphate, it is vital that the Government of Iraq, with the support of the USG and the international community, continues to prioritize humanitarian assistance and stabilization efforts in order to allow the expedient return of internally displaced persons. While millions of Iraqis have returned home, over 3.2 million remain displaced as a result of the ISIS occupation.

We are working closely with the Department of State, the United States Agency for International Development, the United Nations, and our Coalition partners on near-term stabilization activities to support the Government of Iraq. Some examples of U.S. supported activities include demining, rubble removal, and restoring essential services and access to potable water. Although DoD does not possess the authority to conduct stabilization activities on its own, we continue to support our interagency partners in their efforts to stabilize Iraq, and the results speak for themselves. Over 2.2 million Iraqis, including more than a quarter million Mosul residents, have returned home. As significant as this accomplishment is, there is more work to do with our Iraqi partners. Part of ISIS's success is derived from its ability to capitalize on sectarian grievances and disenfranchisement. Allegations of abuses, extrajudicial killings, and other Law of Armed Conflict violations feed ISIS's narrative that the Government of Iraq is illegitimate. For this reason, we continue to advise the Government of Iraq on the importance of transparency and investigating all credible allegations of abuse. Prime Minister Abadi is personally committed to this effort, and has stated that he will thoroughly investigate any such allegations and hold those deemed responsible accountable in accordance with due process and Iraqi law.

Upon the physical destruction of ISIS's caliphate, we will continue the global campaign to defeat ISIS. This effort will bolster long-term stability within Iraq by engaging ISIS globally and preventing the flow of foreign fighters back to the region. The whole-of-government global campaign will continue to attack ISIS and its affiliates to further degrade their ability to recruit and maintain a fighting force. We will also continue, alongside our Coalition and interagency partners, to pressure the international community to counter the radical salafi jihadist ideology that fuels many of the world's violent extremist organizations. All of these efforts will serve to help prevent a resurgence of ISIS, provide an opportunity for inclusive and effective governance at all levels to thrive, and promote long-term stability.

Again, thank you for having us here today, we look forward to your questions.