

INTERNATIONAL SECURITY UPDATE

June 26 - July 2, 2014

1. [Kerry: Iranian Nuclear Deal Still Possible, But Time Running Out](#) (07-01-2014)
2. [Bosnia, United States Share Best Practices for Land Mine Removal](#) (07-01-2014)
3. [Breedlove: Russian Actions Bring Europe to Decisive Point](#) (06-30-2014)
4. [Dempsey: Iraqi National Unity Needed to Counter ISIL](#) (06-29-2014)
5. [President Requests \\$58.6 Billion for Overseas Contingencies](#) (06-27-2014)
6. [Kerry on Georgia, Moldova, Ukraine's EU Agreements](#) (06-27-2014)
7. [Secretary Kerry Meets with Syrian Opposition Coalition President](#) (06-27-2014)
8. [Foreign Ministers Finalize Plans for NATO Mission in Afghanistan](#) (06-26-2014)
9. [U.S. Advisors Set Up Operations in Baghdad](#) (06-26-2014)

1. [Kerry: Iranian Nuclear Deal Still Possible, But Time Running Out](#) (07-01-2014)

This commentary by Secretary of State John Kerry was first published in The Washington Post on June 30.

Iranian nuclear deal still is possible, but time is running out
by John Kerry, Secretary of State

July 20, the deadline to negotiate a comprehensive agreement on Iran's nuclear program, is fast approaching.

All along, these negotiations have been about a choice for Iran's leaders. They can agree to the steps necessary to assure the world that their country's nuclear program will be exclusively peaceful and not be used to build a weapon, or they can squander a historic opportunity to end Iran's economic and diplomatic isolation and improve the lives of their people.

Diplomacy and leadership are marked by tough calls. This shouldn't be one of them.

Iranian officials have stated repeatedly and unambiguously that they have no intention of building a nuclear weapon and that their nuclear activities are designed solely to fulfill civilian needs. Assuming that's true, it's not a hard proposition to prove.

The United States and our partners have demonstrated to Iran how serious we are. During the negotiations to reach the Joint Plan of Action, we extended our hand to the Iranians and met with them directly to understand what Iran wanted from its nuclear program. Along with our international partners, we helped chart a path that would allow Iran to have a domestic program for exclusively peaceful purposes. We proved that we were flexible in offering financial relief.

Throughout these talks, Iran's negotiators have been serious. Iran has also defied the expectations of some by meeting its obligations under the Joint Plan of Action, which has allowed time and space for the comprehensive negotiations to proceed. Specifically, Iran has been eliminating its stockpile of higher levels of enriched uranium, limited its enrichment capability by not installing or starting up additional centrifuges, refrained from making further advances at its enrichment facilities and heavy-water reactor, and allowed new and more frequent inspections. In exchange, the European Union and the P5+1 have provided limited financial relief to Iran, even as the architecture of international sanctions and the vast majority of sanctions themselves remained firmly in place.

Now Iran must choose. During the comprehensive negotiations, the world has sought nothing more than for Iran to back up its words with concrete and verifiable actions. We have, over the past several months, proposed a series of reasonable, verifiable and easily achievable measures that would ensure Iran cannot obtain a nuclear weapon and that its program is limited to peaceful purposes. In return, Iran would be granted phased relief from nuclear-related sanctions.

What will Iran choose? Despite many months of discussion, we don't know yet. We do know that substantial gaps still exist between what Iran's negotiators say they are willing to do and what they must do to achieve a comprehensive agreement. We also know that their public optimism about the potential outcome of these negotiations has not been matched, to date, by the positions they have articulated behind closed doors.

These gaps aren't caused by excessive demands on our part. On the contrary, the E.U. and P5+1 negotiators have listened closely to Iran's questions and concerns and showed flexibility to the extent possible consistent with our fundamental goals for this negotiation. We have worked closely with Iran to design a pathway for a program that meets all of the requirements for peaceful, civilian purposes.

There remains a discrepancy, however, between Iran's professed intent with respect to its nuclear program and the actual content of that program to date. The divide between what Iran says and what it has done underscores why these negotiations are necessary and why the international community united to impose sanctions in the first place.

Iran's claim that the world should simply trust its words ignores the fact that the International Atomic Energy Agency has reported since 2002 on dozens of violations by Iran of its international nonproliferation obligations, starting in the early 1980s. The U.N. Security Council responded by adopting four resolutions under Chapter VII, requiring Iran to take steps to address these violations. These issues cannot be dismissed; they must be addressed by the Iranians if a comprehensive solution is to be reached. These are not just the expectations of any one country, but of the community of nations.

To gain relief from sanctions, the world is simply asking Iran to demonstrate that its nuclear activities are what it claims them to be.

Nine months ago, Iran's president, Hassan Rouhani, wrote in *The Post* that: "International politics is no longer a zero sum game but a multi-dimensional arena where cooperation and competition often occur simultaneously. . . . World leaders are expected to lead in turning threats into opportunities."

It was in that spirit that President Obama committed the United States to exploring the possibility of a negotiated solution to Iran's nuclear standoff. We entered into this negotiating process because we believed it had a real chance to succeed.

It still does, but time is running short.

If Iran is able to make these choices, there will be positive outcomes for the Iranian people and for their economy. Iran will be able to use its significant scientific know-how for international civil nuclear cooperation. Businesses could return to Iran, bringing much needed investment, jobs and many additional goods and services. Iran could have greater access to the international financial system. The result would be an Iranian economy that begins to grow at a significant and sustainable pace, boosting the standard of living among the Iranian population. If Iran is not ready to do so, international sanctions will tighten and Iran's isolation will deepen.

Our negotiators will be working constantly in Vienna between now and July 20. There may be pressure to put more time on the clock. But no extension is possible unless all sides agree, and the United States and our partners will not consent to an extension merely to drag out negotiations. Iran must show a genuine willingness to respond to the international community's legitimate concerns in the time that remains.

In this troubled world, the chance does not often arise to reach an agreement peacefully that will meet the essential and publicly expressed needs of all sides, make the world safer, ease regional tensions and enable greater prosperity. We have such an opportunity, and a historic breakthrough is possible. It's a matter of political will and proving intentions, not of capacity. It's a matter of choices. Let us all choose wisely.

2. Bosnia, United States Share Best Practices for Land Mine Removal (07-01-2014)

Washington — Military-to-military exchanges are giving American and Bosnian soldiers the chance to train together on land mine removal and refine best practices for ensuring public safety.

When the war in Bosnia ended in 1995, Bosnia was one of the most heavily mined countries on earth. Almost 20 years later, Bosnian army explosive ordnance disposal technicians are working with U.S. Army technicians to learn techniques for effective mine removal.

U.S. Army Captain David Watkins, commander of the 55th Explosive Ordnance Disposal (EOD) Company, and Bosnian Army Captain Aleksandar Atelj and Staff Sergeant Arnes Hodzic, were three of the soldiers who trained at Fort Belvoir in Virginia during the Bosnians' visit to the United States.

"Bosnia has a unique EOD challenge," Watkins said June 27. "The country is heavily mined with both anti-personnel and anti-tank land mines. Recently, heavy flooding has proposed an even more complex problem as minefields are shifting to unmarked areas."

Watkins said the Bosnian visit is part of the National Guard-managed State Partnership Program. An American team from the 32nd Civil Support Team traveled to Bosnia in April.

"These military-to-military swaps give American and Bosnian soldiers the chance to train together and refine best practices for ensuring the safety of the public," Watkins said.

The Bosnian army is preparing to conduct new missions, said Watkins, who explained that the “Bosnian army is looking to do a mission shift from strictly homeland defense to more of a civil support role for emergencies.”

During their visit to the United States, the Bosnian EOD troops will observe Exercise Ravens Challenge, an interagency exercise hosted by the U.S. Department of Justice.

[Fact Sheet on Changes to U.S. Anti-Personnel Landmine Policy](#) (06-27-2014)

The United States announced today that it will not produce or otherwise acquire any anti-personnel landmines (APL) in the future, including to replace expiring stockpiles. The announcement, delivered at the Third Review Conference of the Ottawa Convention in Maputo, Mozambique, underscores the U.S. commitment to the spirit and humanitarian aims of the Ottawa Convention, the treaty that prohibits the use, stockpiling, production, and transfer of APL. The U.S. delegation in Maputo further announced that the United States is diligently pursuing solutions that would be compliant with and that would ultimately allow the United States to accede to the Ottawa Convention. We are also conducting a high fidelity modeling and simulation effort to ascertain how to mitigate the risks associated with the loss of APL. Other aspects of U.S. landmine policy remain under consideration, and we will share outcomes from this process as we are able to do so.

This announcement marks another important step in our landmine policy. It follows previous steps to end the use of all non-detectable mines and all persistent mines, which can remain active for years after the end of a conflict.

The United States is also the world’s single largest financial supporter of humanitarian mine action, which includes not only clearance of landmines, but also medical rehabilitation and vocational training for those injured by landmines and other explosive remnants of war. Since the United States Humanitarian Mine Action Program was established in 1993, the United States has provided over \$2.3 billion in aid in over 90 countries for conventional weapons destruction programs. Through this assistance, the United States has:

- Helped 15 countries to become free from the humanitarian impact of landmines;
- Provided emergency assistance to support the removal or mitigation of conventional weapons including landmines and other unexploded ordnance in more than 18 countries; and
- Provided assistive devices and other rehabilitation services to over 250,000 people in 35 countries through the U.S. Agency for International Development-managed Leahy War Victims Fund.

These vital U.S. assistance efforts help post-conflict countries consolidate peace and set the stage for reconstruction and development. Clearance efforts and victim assistance programs return land and infrastructure to productive use and assist in the rehabilitation and reintegration into society of survivors of mine and explosive remnants of war incidents.

Further information on U.S. humanitarian demining and conventional weapons destruction programs can be found in the State Department’s annual To Walk the Earth in Safety report.

Related Sites:

[White House on U.S. Anti-Personnel Landmine Policy](#)

3. Breedlove: Russian Actions Bring Europe to Decisive Point (06-30-2014)

By Claudette Roulo
American Forces Press Service

WASHINGTON, June 30, 2014 – The aggressive actions by Russia in Ukraine have brought Europe to perhaps the most decisive point since the end of the Cold War, and additional rotational forces may be needed on the continent for the sustained presence now envisioned, the top U.S. commander in Europe said today.

Air Force Gen. Philip M. Breedlove, NATO's supreme allied commander for Europe and commander of U.S. European Command, told reporters at the Pentagon that Russia's actions show just how important it is to maintain a forward presence in Europe to reassure the nation's partners and allies.

About seven Russian battalion task groups remain on the border with Ukraine, he said, as well as numerous special operations forces. "That's not a helpful development in what it brings to the problem," the general said.

Russian regular military forces are facilitating the movement of forces, equipment and finances across the Ukrainian border, he said.

"Russian irregular forces are very active inside eastern Ukraine. Russian-backed forces are active inside eastern Ukraine. And Russian financing is very active inside eastern Ukraine," Breedlove said.

President Barack Obama's \$1 billion European Reassurance Initiative will sustain U.S. forces in Europe and assist in protecting national security interests, the general said.

"It's too early to lay out the details of what we will do," he said, "but it will cover increased and enhanced training, readiness, exercises, and necessary facility improvements that we will need in order to conduct quality training and readiness activities with all of our allies and partners.

The training efforts will now fall under Operation Atlantic Resolve, the general added.

"In this operation, we will continue to demonstrate our continued commitment to the collective security of NATO and dedication to the enduring peace and stability in the region, in light of the Russian intervention in Ukraine specifically," Breedlove said.

The situation in Ukraine changes some long-held expectations in the region, he said.

"For the last 12 to 14 years, we've been looking at Russia as a partner. We've been making decisions about force structure, basing investments, et cetera, et cetera, looking to Russia as a partner," the general said.

Now, the situation is very different, he said, and there's a new baseline for the conversation about U.S. capacity and capability in Europe.

Atlantic Resolve will demonstrate the United States' solemn commitment to the collective defense of all NATO allies, Breedlove noted.

"Our ability to respond quickly to reassure our European allies and partners was enabled by our forward-stationed forces and the force structure we have in place now," the general said.

Breedlove said he believes the current force structure in Europe is about right, but additional forces may be needed to cover the sustained, persistent presence that is now being envisioned.

"We are proud carriers of a legacy that began just over 70 years ago on the shores of Normandy. That legacy has endowed us with the NATO alliance and steadfast relationships with incredible allies and partners who have fought alongside of us in almost every conflict," the general said.

"It is indeed a momentous time in Europe," Breedlove said. "But with the support of our partners and allies, we will face these challenges like we have in the past -- together -- and build a safer, more secure Europe."

Biographies:

[Air Force Gen. Philip M. Breedlove](#)

Related Sites:

[Transcript](#)

[Special Report: Operation Atlantic Resolve](#)

[U.S European Command](#)

[Special Report: U.S. European Command](#)

[NATO](#)

4. Dempsey: Iraqi National Unity Needed to Counter ISIL (06-29-2014)

By Jim Garamone

American Forces Press Service

WASHINGTON, June 29, 2014 – The formation of a national unity government in Iraq will be key to defeating the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant, the chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff told National Public Radio Friday.

Army Gen. Martin E. Dempsey said it is clearly to America's advantage to oppose ISIL. American teams now in Iraq are looking at the threat posed by ISIL and the means Iraq has to oppose that threat, he added.

ISIL is a trans-regional terror organization that originated in Syria and now controls large portions of Northern and Western Iraq. Iraqi security forces in those areas collapsed and did not confront the extremist threat.

"It's in our national interest to begin to think through how to counter that threat," Dempsey said.

To do so, the United States needs a credible partner in the Iraqi government, the top U.S. military officer told NPR. For more than a decade, U.S. officials have stressed to Iraqi leaders that military solutions "were only a part of the equation -- that they had to take the opportunity to find a way to form a government that would work on behalf of all the people," Dempsey said.

He said is disappointed that Iraqi leaders did not heed that advice and did not set up a government that reached out to all people of the nation. "My assessment of the situation we're in today is not a military failure, but a failure of political leadership," he noted.

ISIL's advance into Iraq was accompanied by reports of massacres of Iraqi service members and citizens. But because many Iraqis are dissatisfied with their government, the group has managed to attract allies. These groups are not natural allies of ISIL, however, and if Iraq goes the route of a unity government, Dempsey said he fully expects these ISIL sympathizers to peel away from the group.

President Barack Obama has asked the U.S. military to work on options for him. "Those options do include high-value individuals who are the leadership of ISIL, it includes potentially the protection of ... critical infrastructure," the chairman said. "And then there is the issue of blunting attacks by massed groups of ISIL."

The American teams in Iraq are refining the intelligence picture of the group. American aircraft are flying intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance missions over Iraq to color in that picture, "so that if the decision was made to support the Iraqi Security Forces as they confront ISIL, then we could do so," Dempsey said.

Any options need to be precise, he noted.

"One thing we would absolutely have to be concerned about is that this doesn't become an issue between Sunni and Shia, with us taking one side or the other," the chairman said.

"There's a great phrase that when there's no center, there are only sides. And that's why you've heard us -- all those of us who've had experience in Iraq -- state as a first principle that we really have to see what the Iraqis themselves, and in particular, the central government intends to do to try to get these groups into a better place," he continued.

A lot depends on the assessment, Dempsey said. The American teams need to look at the Iraqi security forces and assess whether they can defend the nation.

"Once we have that assessment that will take one of two directions," he said. "One is if they can defend Baghdad and we get indications that the central government intends to form a unity government that will begin to address the issues that have led to this uprising, if you will. Then I think that takes us on the path to provide a certain kind of support going forward."

But if the assessment is that Iraqi forces may not hold together, or the central government is not forming a national unity government, "we still have the ISIL challenge, but we would probably look at other ways to address with other regional partners," Dempsey said.

Iran has national interests in Iraq, and that must be taken under consideration, Dempsey said. "Iran has been active in Iraq for a very long time," he said. "I can say with some confidence that Iran, which has a deep interest in the Shia holy sites, is undoubtedly providing assistance and support and advice on how to secure those holy sites. That wouldn't surprise me at all. In fact, I would be surprised if we didn't find it."

The level of support Iran is giving Iraq will influence what the United States does. "One of the things we need to find out is whether Iran is embedded in and advising and supporting the Iraqi

security forces,” he said. “That will take us in one direction. If they’re not, that’ll take us in another. And it’s really about understanding facts on the ground before we make a decision on how to address them.”

The chairman said the United States will “look at Iran with a cold eye on where and when we may need to operate in the same space and toward what is potentially the same goal of countering ISIL. But I can state with some assurance that their goals in Iraq are not going to be completely aligned with ours, and we’re very clear about that.”

Biographies:

[Army Gen. Martin E. Dempsey](#)

5. President Requests \$58.6 Billion for Overseas Contingencies (06-27-2014)

By Jim Garamone
American Forces Press Service

WASHINGTON, June 27, 2014 – President Barack Obama’s fiscal year 2015 budget request for overseas contingency operations is significantly less than last year, but still provides the resources needed to protect the United States and its interests, Defense Department officials said.

The request calls for \$58.6 billion for the Defense Department in the fiscal year beginning Oct. 1, 2014.

“This is nearly \$21 billion less than last year’s OCO request, representing a 26 percent reduction in OCO funding as our nation concludes 13 years of war and our mission in Afghanistan transitions to a training, advisory, and assistance role post-2014,” Pentagon Press Secretary Navy Rear Adm. John Kirby said in a written statement issued yesterday.

Defense Secretary Chuck Hagel fully supports the request, saying it protects the broad range of U.S. national security interests.

The request funds temporary and extraordinary expenses associated with military operations in Afghanistan. It also funds counterterrorism efforts.

The request covers funding for DOD, the State Department and other government agencies not covered by the base budgets of these organizations.

The request covers some high-profile and quick-trigger initiatives.

It calls for \$5 billion for the Counterterrorism Partnerships Fund. The fund builds on authorities to respond to a range of terrorist threats and crisis response scenarios. It is designed to help build the counterterrorism capacity of partner states from South Asia to the Sahel.

If approved \$500 million will be used to train and equip appropriately vetted elements of the moderate Syrian armed opposition. This would allow moderates in the country to defend themselves against attacks by the Assad regime and would weaken extremists groups like the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant.

In light of Russian actions regarding Ukraine, the budget request calls for \$1 billion for the president’s proposed European Reassurance Initiative.

“These funds will help us improve the security of our NATO allies and partner states by increasing exercises, improving European infrastructure and allowing us to enhance the prepositioning of U.S. equipment in Europe,” Kirby said in the statement.

The request does reflect the transition in Afghanistan, according to officials. The costs are dropping, but not precipitously. The department will still incur significant costs to transport personnel, supplies and equipment back to their home stations.

Funding is also needed to sustain Afghan security forces.

Officials said that funding will help the U.S. military re-set from over a decade of fighting to repair and replace equipment and munitions.

Congress must pass the OCO request.

Biographies:
Chuck Hagel

Related Sites:

[Fact Sheet](#)

[Statement by Pentagon Press Secretary Rear Adm. John Kirby on Fiscal Year 2015 Overseas Contingency Operations Request](#)

[6. Kerry on Georgia, Moldova, Ukraine’s EU Agreements \(06-27-2014\)](#)

The United States congratulates Georgia, Moldova, and Ukraine on signing Association Agreements and establishing Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Areas with the European Union.

The agreements signed today mark a major step toward integrating these Eastern Partnership countries more closely with the European Union and realizing a Europe whole, free, and at peace.

It is not just that these agreements link the EU’s eastern neighbors into its single market and unlock new opportunities for trade and assistance. Today, Moldova, Georgia, and Ukraine have signaled their readiness to undertake important economic and legal reforms that will make them stronger, more vibrant democracies.

We continue to support the territorial integrity of Georgia, Moldova, and Ukraine. The decision on the best path to security, prosperity, and a better future for their citizens is one that can and should be made by these sovereign nations, and by them alone. We applaud the hard work and determination that has brought them to this point, and we will continue to stand with them as they work to implement key reforms and build more prosperous, stable, and democratic societies.

[7. Secretary Kerry Meets with Syrian Opposition Coalition President \(06-27-2014\)](#)

SECRETARY KERRY: It’s my pleasure to meet with President Jarba. And obviously in light of what has happened in Iraq, we have even more to talk about in terms of the moderate opposition in Syria, which has the ability to be a very important player in pushing back against ISIL’s presence. They have been, not just in Syria but also in Iraq. President Jarba represents a tribe that reaches

right into Iraq. He knows the people there, and his point of view and the Syrian opposition's will be very important going forward.

So we're also at a moment of increased effort with the opposition, so I look forward to a chance to speak with President Jarba and to share some thoughts.

MR. JARBA: (In Arabic.)

MR. JARBA: (Via interpreter) Thank you very much. I'm delighted to meet with you, Mr. Secretary, here to discuss several important issues, especially in light of the critical times in Syria and Iraq alike. There's great confusion in the region, and now the war against terrorism has to be even stronger than before.

The situation in Iraq is slightly different than it is in Syria. The policies of Prime Minister Iraqi – Nouri Maliki, after eight years in power, have resulted in greater division. Now the situation is very grave and there are sectarian militias ruling the country, so we have to have greater efforts on the part of the U.S. and regional powers to address the situation in Iraq, especially also on the part of its neighbors, and Saudi Arabia in particular. The borders between Iraq and Syria are now practically open, and Daesh, or ISIL, has made – has just occupied Abu Kamal, and it's launching a very strong, severe war in Deir al-Zour.

And in spite of the opposition, we still need greater assistance. And President Obama just announced that the U.S. will be giving the moderate opposition in Syria another half billion dollars, and this is very important. We hope for greater cooperation with the U.S., and General Abdul Ilah al Bashir is ready to cooperate with the U.S. side.

Once again, we welcome you and we welcome the (inaudible).

SECRETARY KERRY: Shukran. Thank you, all.

Related Sites:

[Briefing on Kerry's Talks with Syrian, Saudi, Kurdish Officials](#)
[State Dept. Briefing on Kerry's Meeting with Middle East Leaders](#)

8. Foreign Ministers Finalize Plans for NATO Mission in Afghanistan (06-26-2014)

Washington — NATO foreign ministers and their counterparts from International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) partner nations met in Brussels with Afghan Deputy Foreign Minister Ershad Ahmadi June 25 to finalize plans for the shape the NATO-led mission in Afghanistan will take post-2014.

They reviewed progress in the ISAF mission, took stock of the ongoing election process and firmed up operational plans for the launch of a new NATO-led mission to train, advise and assist the Afghan security forces after 2014, according to a June 25 NATO press release.

“In six months' time, our ISAF combat mission will be completed. Afghan troops and police will be fully responsible for security across the country,” NATO Secretary-General Anders Fogh Rasmussen said after the meeting.

“Today we discussed our coordinated efforts to wind down our combat presence in Afghanistan while continuing our commitment to combating terrorism and preserving the gains made by the

people of Afghanistan,” Secretary of State John Kerry said at a June 25 press conference in Brussels. “NATO, significantly, has succeeded as an alliance for more than six decades now because it has always recognized that security threats of the future will not always look like the security threats that you face today, and certainly not like those of the past.”

At their meeting, ministers reviewed the ongoing electoral process and praised the professionalism displayed by the Afghan security forces in securing the elections and the commitment shown by the Afghan people to take part in building a new future for Afghanistan.

“The people of Afghanistan have made their choice clear. They want democracy. We salute their choice and the determination they have shown in both rounds of presidential elections,” the secretary-general said. “The electoral process must run its course in a timely manner. Any allegations of irregularities should be addressed through the proper channels. And both candidates should play a constructive and responsible role.”

The step by the foreign ministers confirms NATO allies and partners’ continued commitment to Afghanistan after 2014.

“Today, we endorsed the detailed operational plan for that new mission, called Resolute Support. But it is the Afghans who must take the next step,” Rasmussen said. “The necessary security agreements must be signed soon. Otherwise, we will not be able to keep any troops in Afghanistan from next year.”

Ministers also reconfirmed their commitment to provide funding to sustain the Afghan security forces, while making clear that the Afghan authorities must also live up to their commitment to tackle corruption and to contribute an increasing amount to the funding of their own forces. Furthermore, NATO remains committed to its enduring partnership with Afghanistan, which will involve both political consultation and practical cooperation.

“So we still have challenges. But we have shown our determination to continue playing our part in Afghanistan’s stability for the future. And Afghanistan’s leaders know what they have to do,” the secretary-general said.

Related Articles:

[ISAF’s Gender Advisor Mentors Afghan Female Counterparts](#)

[9. U.S. Advisors Set Up Operations in Baghdad \(06-26-2014\)](#)

[More U.S. Assessment Teams Arrive in Baghdad](#)

By Jim Garamone
American Forces Press Service

WASHINGTON, June 26, 2014 – U.S. forces in Baghdad have opened a joint operations center in the city to assess the security situation in the wake of the rapid territorial gains made by Sunni militants, bringing the number of American service members there to about 500, Defense Department officials said today.

An additional four teams of U.S. advisors arrived in the Iraqi capital last night, Pentagon spokesman Army Col. Steve Warren said, bringing the number of teams to six.

Warren described the deployments as enhanced teams commanded by lieutenant colonels that are fanning out across Baghdad and assessing the Iraqi military. President Barack Obama ordered the teams to Iraq following gains made by Syrian-based Sunni militants of the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant who have overrun towns and cities across Iraq's northern and western provinces as they move closer to Baghdad, facing little or no resistance from Iraqi security forces.

The four teams bring 50 people with them, which puts the number of American assessors on the ground to 90. Warren said an additional 90 personnel have set up the joint operations center in Baghdad, meaning 180 of the possible 300 U.S. service members Obama said he is prepared to send to Iraq have arrived.

Overall, there are approximately 500 American military personnel in Iraq. "Some of them are conducting an advise and assist mission, some are manning the joint operations center, some of them are part of the Office of Security Cooperation and yet others are Marines that are part of a fleet anti-terrorism security team platoon," Warren said.

The assessment teams are mostly made up of Army Special Forces personnel. They will advise and assist the Iraqi military at various levels of command.

The teams will take two to three weeks to assess the Iraqi military and make their reports, officials said.

Warren would not comment on reports that Iran is operating drones over Iraq and supplying the Baghdad government with arms. He did however, call on all regional countries to "participate constructively in the situation" in Iraq. The United States does not want ethnic or religious tensions increased.

Warren said the United States will establish another joint operations center in northern Iraq in the coming days or weeks. The commander of the U.S. forces in Iraq is Army Maj. Gen. Dana Pittard.

Related Articles:

[U.S. Advisors Arrive in Iraq to Begin Assessment](#)
