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**August 21 - 28, 2014**

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**1. [Hagel: 7 Nations Pledge Arms for Iraqi Kurds in ISIL Fight](#) (08-27-2014)**

Washington — Seven nations have joined the United States and the Iraqi government with pledges to provide arms to Kurdish forces in northern Iraq, where they are battling terrorists from the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant, Defense Secretary Chuck Hagel said August 26. Albania, Canada, Croatia, Denmark, Italy, France and the United Kingdom “have committed to helping provide Kurdish forces urgently needed arms and equipment,” Hagel said in a written statement as his spokesman, Navy Rear Admiral John Kirby, was describing the threat from ISIL as “only going to grow.”

Hagel said the resupply operations have already begun and will accelerate in the coming days with more nations expected to contribute.

“This is a serious threat from a serious group of terrorists,” Kirby told reporters at a news conference. “And we need to stay mindful of doing what we need to do to protect American citizens at home and abroad.”

Since June, Syrian-based ISIL terrorists have crossed the border and captured large sections of northern Iraq, including the country’s second-largest city, Mosul, with little or no resistance from the Iraqi military, and they have threatened to kill those they consider apostates. President Obama ordered military advisers to the country to help the Iraqi military and to protect Americans there, but has vowed that no U.S. combat troops will return to Iraq. He did so again August 26. “We’ll not allow the United States to be dragged back into another ground war in Iraq,” he said in remarks to the American Legion in Charlotte, North Carolina.

At the Pentagon, Kirby would not detail possible future U.S. military operations beyond the current role of advising the Iraqi military and conducting surveillance flights and targeted airstrikes against ISIL targets in Iraq. Last week, Hagel described the threat posed by ISIL fighters as “imminent” and said the United States is “looking at all options.”

“With respect to providing military options, we’re going to be ready to do that, but I’m not going to get into the details,” Kirby told reporters.

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## **2. Obama Explains Strategy for Countering Terrorists in Iraq (08-27-2014)**

In a speech in Charlotte, North Carolina, President Obama explains his administration’s strategy for countering terrorism in Iraq.

In an August 26 speech in Charlotte, North Carolina, President Obama recapped his administration’s strategy for countering terrorism in Iraq.

“We’re strengthening our partners — more military assistance to government and Kurdish forces in Iraq and moderate opposition in Syria,” he said. “We’re urging Iraqis to forge the kind of inclusive government that can deliver on national unity, and strong security forces and good governance that are ultimately going to be the antidote against terrorists. And we’re urging countries in the region and building an international coalition, including our closest allies, to support Iraqis as they take the fight to these barbaric terrorists.”

The president was addressing U.S. veterans attending the American Legion’s 96th annual convention.

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## **3. U.S. Strikes ISIL near Erbil, Mosul Dam (08-27-2014)**

Three airstrikes destroy ISIL vehicles in the vicinity of Erbil and the Mosul Dam in Iraq. U.S. sailors guide an F/A-18C Hornet on the flight deck of the aircraft carrier USS George H.W. Bush in the Arabian Gulf. The carrier is supporting U.S. operations in the region.

U.S. military officials said August 27 that three airstrikes in the vicinity of Erbil, Iraq, and the Mosul Dam destroyed an ISIL Humvee, a supply truck and three armored vehicles and severely damaged an ISIL building. The strikes supported Iraqi security force operations against the group known as Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant.

Officials said U.S. airstrikes are designed to support Iraqi security force and Kurdish defense operations, as well as to protect critical infrastructure, humanitarian efforts and U.S. personnel.

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#### **4. Obama: U.S. Combat Troops Will Not Return to Iraq (08-26-2014)**

FORT MEADE. Md., Aug. 26, 2014 – President Barack Obama has again emphasized that U.S. combat troops will not be sent back into Iraq even as the United States continues to provide military assistance to the Iraqi government and the Kurds in their battle against Sunni terrorists who have taken hold of large sections of the country.

In an address today to the American Legion’s annual convention in Charlotte, North Carolina, Obama said the security of the American people, including diplomats and military advisors in Iraq, remains his top priority, which is why he authorized airstrikes against fighters from the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant.

But he added “we’ll not allow the United States to be dragged back into another ground war in Iraq. Because ultimately, it is up to the Iraqis to bridge their differences and secure themselves.” And he said, “our military action in Iraq has to be part of a broader strategy to protect our people and support our partners to take the fight to ISIL.”

U.S. strategy is to strengthen partners and to provide more military assistance to government and Kurdish forces in Iraq and moderate opposition in Syria, Obama said. The United States also urges Iraq to form an inclusive government to build national unity and strong security forces. This will provide the “antidote against terrorists,” he said.

The United States is also building a coalition of nations against ISIL, but America can and will defend its citizens. “Our message to anyone who harms our people is simple: America does not forget. Our reach is long. We are patient. Justice will be done,” the president said. “We have proved time and time again we will do what is necessary ... to go after those who harm Americans.” He made the comments just days after American journalist James Foley, who had been held captive by ISIL terrorists for two years, was beheaded on video.

The American military is ready to take direct action when ordered, Obama said. “Rooting out a cancer like ISIL won’t be easy, and it won’t be quick,” he said. “But tyrants and murderers before them should recognize that kind of hateful vision ultimately is no match for the strength and hopes of people who stand together for the security and dignity and freedom that is the birthright of every human being.”

Overall, the president’s message was that the United States will continue to lead in the 21st century. “Nobody else can do what we do,” Obama said. No other nation, he added, does more to underwrite the security and prosperity on which the world depends. In times of crisis, no other nation can rally such broad coalitions to stand up for international norms and peace, he said.

Even nations that criticize the United States turn to America when the chips are down, he said. “That’s what American leadership looks like,” he said. “It’s why the United States is, and will remain, the one indispensable nation in the world.”

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#### **5. Obama Approves Surveillance Flights over Syria (08-26-2014)**

Washington — A senior White House official says President Barack Obama has authorized surveillance flights over Syria.

On August 25, a White House official said that Obama has not approved any military action, but that the U.S. is preparing military options for combating the Islamic State fighters who have taken over large areas in eastern Syria and northern and western Iraq.

U.S. planes have been carrying out airstrikes in Iraq, helping Iraqi and Kurdish forces take back territory from the militants, including a dam in Mosul that is key to providing power to many in Iraq.

Pentagon officials have expressed the need to go after the Islamic State group on both sides of the border.

The operation is complicated by the ongoing civil war in Syria. White House officials say Obama does not want U.S. action to be seen as aiding Syrian President Bashar al-Assad, who has repeatedly blamed "terrorists" for the conflict that has raged in his country for more than three years.

White House Press Secretary Josh Earnest described the situation Monday as having "a lot of cross pressures."

"We're not interested in trying to help the Assad regime. In fact, we have been calling for a number of years now for the Assad regime to step down," said Earnest.

Earlier on August 25, Syrian Foreign Minister Walid al-Moallem said Syria is open to working with the international community, including the United States and Britain, but that any attacks should be coordinated with the government in Damascus.

He warned that any unilateral U.S. action inside Syria "would be an act of aggression" that could result in Syrian air defenses attempting to shoot down American warplanes.

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## **6. Kerry on Gaza Cease-Fire Agreement (08-26-2014)**

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF STATE, Office of the Spokesperson  
Washington, D.C.

### **STATEMENT BY SECRETARY KERRY**

We strongly support today's ceasefire agreement, and call on all parties to fully and completely comply with its terms. We hope very much that this ceasefire will prove to be durable and sustainable, that it will put an end to rocket and mortar attacks, and that it will help to bring about an enduring end to the conflict in Gaza.

As soon as calm is restored, the delivery of urgently needed humanitarian assistance to the people in Gaza must be accelerated, and the United States and the international community are fully committed to supporting this effort. We are also prepared to work with our international partners on a major reconstruction initiative, with appropriate measures in place to ensure that this is for the benefit of the civilian population in Gaza, not Hamas and other terrorist organizations. We look forward to coordinating closely with President Abbas and the Palestinian Authority on these critical efforts.

Over the course of the last few weeks, we have continued to work in close coordination with the Egyptians, the Israelis and the Palestinian Authority, and others in the region to arrive at this

moment of opportunity. I want to commend the Egyptians for their role in hosting the negotiations in Cairo and for continuing to work to reach agreement on a ceasefire.

We are all aware that this is an opportunity, not a certainty. Today's agreement comes after many hours and days of intensive discussions about how a sustainable ceasefire might provide the space and the opportunity to address long-term issues. I have assured both Prime Minister Netanyahu and President Abbas that the United States is ready to continue our engagement in that effort.

We are approaching the next phase with our eyes wide open. We have been down this road before and we are all aware of the challenges ahead. Both the Israelis and the Palestinians have strong views about their needs and the future of the region. Certain bedrock outcomes, though, are essential if there is to be long term solution for Gaza. Israelis have to be able to live in peace and security, without terrorist attacks, without rockets, without tunnels, without sirens going off and families scrambling to bomb shelters. Palestinians also need to be able to live in peace and security and have full economic and social opportunities to build better lives for themselves and for their children. Getting there will not be easy, but it is the only path to a future that the people on both sides deserve.

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## **7. DOD: Russian Movements Further Increasing Tensions (08-26-2014)**

Washington — Despite Russian claims of de-escalating tensions with Ukraine, Russia's actions, including movement of heavy equipment across the border, continue to increase tension, Defense Department spokesman Army Colonel Steven Warren told Pentagon reporters August 25.

"We've seen columns of Russian heavy equipment flow from Russia into Ukraine for the last several weeks," he said. "I can confirm that there have been numerous columns of Russian heavy equipment, including tanks, armored personnel carriers, rocket launchers, air defense equipment and other heavy weapons.

"It's very concerning," Warren continued, "and, again, we continue to call on the Russians to immediately stop supporting the Ukrainian separatists and begin working towards peaceful resolution."

The colonel noted the largest column seen entering Ukraine "about two weeks ago" consisted of over 100 pieces of rolling stock that included tanks. "I don't have [an] exact breakdown of how many tanks, how many APCs, how many rocket launchers, but, again, this is something that we've seen now for several weeks," Warren said. "[It] is an indication that the Russians are deeply involved in this separatist movement in Ukraine," he added, "and that they are doing the exact opposite of what they claim they want, which is to de-escalate the situation."

In fact, Warren said, defense officials believe that the Russians' efforts are increasing the tensions and escalating the situation. "We've already reported that Russian artillery and rockets have fired from Russia into Ukraine in a clear violation of Ukraine sovereignty and a clear escalation of tensions there," he said. There have been weapon systems, he said, such as SA-11 surface-to-air missiles, flowing into Ukraine as a part of the columns of military equipment.

"We first started seeing those SA-11s, I believe, [at] the beginning of last week," Warren said. The colonel noted the department generally believes these pieces of equipment are operated by Russian-backed Ukrainian separatists, although it's not entirely clear.

“So, again,” he said, “another indication of the Russians’ desire to escalate the situation to increase tensions and continue their support for the separatist movement in Ukraine.”

Read also: [White House on Russian Convoy in Ukraine](#)

<http://iipdigital.usembassy.gov/st/english/texttrans/2014/08/20140822307051.html#axzz3BfPxxOr3>

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## **8. [U.S. Sees Different Ways to Confront ISIL Besides Military \(08-25-2014\)](#)**

Washington — President Obama has not yet made any decision to pursue military options in Syria against Islamic State extremists.

White House spokesman Josh Earnest said August 25 that while the United States is serious about confronting the Islamic State threat, military force is not the “only tool in the toolbox.”

He added that the only sustainable solution will require the active involvement of an effective and inclusive Iraqi government.

Earnest said there currently is no evidence of an active plot underway by the Islamic State against the U.S. homeland.

Earlier August 25, Syria said it was willing to work with the international community, including the United States and Britain, to fight the advance of Islamic State militants inside Syria, but warned that any attacks should only be carried out in coordination with Damascus.

The United States is already carrying out extensive airstrikes with fighter jets and drones against Islamic State fighters in northern Iraq. The attacks have helped Kurdish soldiers retake the key Mosul Dam that supplies electricity and irrigation to a large swath of Iraq.

Late last week, after an American journalist was beheaded by the militants, Washington said it was considering expanding its operations to attack Islamic State positions inside neighboring Syria.

Foreign Minister Walid al-Moallem said August 25 that Syria is ready to help enforce a United Nations Security Council resolution approved earlier in August aimed at cutting funding and the flow of foreign fighters to the Islamic State and al-Qaida’s Syrian affiliate, the al-Nusra Front.

But there is no sign that Washington is easing its opposition to Syrian President Bashar al-Assad, who has maintained power during a bloody three-year fight against insurgents, including Islamic State militants, seeking to overthrow him.

Moallem said that any unilateral action by the United States inside Syria “would be an act of aggression.” In that event, he warned that Syria’s air defenses could attempt to shoot down U.S. warplanes.

The Islamic State group has taken over much of eastern Syria and northern and western Iraq as it seeks to impose an Islamic caliphate without regard to national borders.

The group’s fighters have continued to advance, seizing territory from both armed opposition groups in Syria’s northern Aleppo province and from the Syrian army in northern Raqqa province.

On August 24 the Islamic State took control of Tabqa air base, the last Syrian military outpost in Raqqa.

Meanwhile, U.N. human rights chief Navi Pillay accused the Islamic State of carrying out “widespread ethnic and religious cleansing,” targeting people based on their ethnic, religious or sectarian affiliation. She said such persecution amounts to crimes against humanity.

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### **9. Joint Statement on Libya from 5 Governments (08-25-2014)**

#### **Joint Statement on Libya by the Governments of France, Germany, Italy, the United Kingdom, and the United States**

The governments of France, Germany, Italy, the United Kingdom, and the United States strongly condemn the escalation of fighting and violence in and around Tripoli, Benghazi, and across Libya, especially against residential areas, public facilities, and critical infrastructure, by both land attacks and air strikes.

We reiterate our calls, joining those of the Libyan interim government, the House of Representatives, and the Libyan people, that all parties in Libya accept an immediate ceasefire and engage constructively in the democratic process, abstaining from confrontational initiatives that risk undermining it. We support the efforts of the UN Support Mission in Libya in this regard. Those responsible for violence, which undermines Libya's democratic transition and national security, must be held accountable. We welcome discussions on the political and security situation in Libya to be held by the United Nations Security Council in the coming days, including consequences for those who undermine Libya's peace and stability.

We call on Libya's interim government and the elected House of Representatives to adopt inclusive policies that benefit all Libyans and to build a government that meets the Libyan peoples' needs for security, reconciliation, and prosperity. We encourage the Constitutional Drafting Assembly to immediately pursue the drafting of a document that enshrines and protects the rights of all Libyans. Further, we encourage the international community to support Libya's elected institutions. We believe outside interference in Libya exacerbates current divisions and undermines Libya's democratic transition.

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### **10. Biden: Iraqis Must Rise Above Differences to Rout Terrorists (08-23-2014)**

In recent months, the terrorist group known within the U.S. government as the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) has seized significant territory inside Iraq, exploiting sectarian divisions and political mistrust that sapped the strength of Iraqi forces. ISIL seeks to rip Iraq apart in its quest to establish a caliphate. But Iraq's communities have started to unite in pushing back.

Since more than 13 million Iraqis [cast their ballots in April](#) despite threats from ISIL to kill anyone who voted, Iraqis have convened a new parliament, selected a speaker and president and designated a new prime minister, [Haider al-Abadi](#), to form a new government.

These steps are meaningful because they show that Iraqis have begun to understand that they must rise above their differences. And that, when they do, they can succeed — not only in uniting the country but in defeating ISIL.

There is no negotiating with ISIL. We have seen its appalling murders of U.S. journalist [James Foley](#) and countless other innocent people, its cruelty and its fanaticism.

But even if there were no ISIL, Iraq's survival would still depend on the ability of Iraqis to set aside their differences and unite in a common effort. Iraq's security would still depend on addressing the alienation that fuels extremist movements and convincing Iraqis that their needs can be met through the political process rather than through violence.

In the past few weeks, President Obama has spoken with Abadi and I have spoken to each of Iraq's incoming and outgoing leaders. We have come away encouraged that they recognize that years of political deadlock and discord must end. As [Abadi wrote the other day](#), the “challenges we face are immense but we will overcome them by uniting. Raging storms may be ahead but we will face them together as one nation.”

For Iraq, success will require genuine compromise from all sides and a new government in Baghdad capable of responding to the needs of all of Iraq's communities. We cannot want that more than Iraqis do. Unless Iraq can do this, no amount of outside intervention will matter — nor will it continue indefinitely.

That's why government formation is so critical. As prime minister-designate, Abadi is working to put forward a new lineup of cabinet ministers and a road map that will set the agenda for Iraq's new government. We are encouraging Iraqi leaders to complete this process as soon as possible. We are hopeful that the road map Iraq's parliament endorses will sketch a vision for harnessing the resources of the state to benefit all communities and take the fight to ISIL.

We are also encouraging Iraq's neighbors to refrain from fueling sectarian divisions, which only plays into ISIL's hands, and instead to treat this shared challenge as an opportunity to begin a new chapter in their relations with Iraq and with each other.

Iraq's security efforts, like its politics, must harness the energy and cooperation of all communities. This new spirit of cooperation was evident this week in northern Iraq, where Iraqi and Kurdish forces worked together [to retake the Mosul dam from ISIL](#). Notwithstanding U.S. support, this operation could not have succeeded without cooperation between the Kurdish pesh merga and Iraqi security forces. This was the first joint operation of its kind, and we believe it is a model to build upon.

Another approach that is emerging is a “functioning federalism” under the Iraqi constitution, which would ensure equitable revenue-sharing for all provinces and establish locally rooted security structures, such as a national guard, to protect the population in cities and towns and deny space for ISIL while protecting Iraq's territorial integrity. The United States would be prepared to offer training and other forms of assistance under our [Strategic Framework Agreement](#) to help such a model succeed.

It will ultimately be up to the Iraqis to define their future under their own constitution, but we are encouraged that a serious debate about that future has begun. As Iraqis continue to make progress, we are prepared to further enhance our support for Iraq's fight against ISIL — and will call on the international community to join Canada, Australia and our European allies in doing the same. ISIL is far from invincible. Its ideology is rejected by most Iraqis. It establishes order not through consent but through fear. It has destroyed ancient religious sites, enslaved women and girls and brutally executed many of the very Sunnis it claims to speak for. ISIL has no legitimate cause or grievance to espouse. And as we saw at the Mosul dam, when its fighting strength is eroded, it can be routed by local forces without U.S. boots on the ground.

This is a fight that Iraq, with help from America and the world, can and must win. We all have a stake in empowering moderates in Iraq to prevent a terrorist state from taking root in the heart of the Middle East. The threat, of course, is not confined to Iraq. Addressing it will also require continued support for our partners in Jordan, Lebanon, the Syrian opposition and others to counter ISIL and address the flow of foreign fighters to and from the battlefield.

As Iraqis begin to unite in their resolve against ISIL, we must be prepared to do the same. We will continue to consult closely with Congress about our strategy in Iraq and the region when it comes to ISIL and the security of our people. This will be a long-term challenge. It is one that our partners around the world, with our support, have no choice but to take on and win — starting in Iraq.

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### **11. Hagel: Joint Efforts Blunt ISIL's Advance in Iraq (08-22-2014)**

Washington — U.S. airstrikes and military assistance to Iraqi and Kurdish security forces have stalled the advance of Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant terrorist forces around Erbil, Iraq, Defense Secretary Chuck Hagel said August 21.

This assistance helped the Iraqis retake and hold the Mosul Dam, which, if breached, would have threatened the lives of thousands of Iraqis as well as American personnel and facilities, Hagel said at a joint news conference with Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Army General Martin E. Dempsey.

“The United States led an international effort to address the humanitarian crisis that unfolded at Mount Sinjar,” the secretary said. “As there continues to be an acute humanitarian need elsewhere in Iraq, the U.S. appreciates the partnership of the United Kingdom, Canada, France, Italy and Australia and the United Nations in helping provide relief. I expect more nations to step forward with more assistance in the weeks ahead.”

While the airstrikes and other assistance created an opening for Iraqi and Kurdish forces to snatch back the initiative from ISIL forces, air attacks will not be enough to remove the terrorist organization from Iraq, Hagel said.

“Addressing the threat posed by ISIL to the future of Iraq requires political reform in Iraq,” he said. “The country’s peaceful transition of power last week was important, and the United States will continue urging Iraq’s new prime minister to establish an inclusive government that is responsive to the needs of all Iraq’s citizens. A united Iraq will be a more secure and prosperous Iraq.” The Defense Department continues to explore all options regarding ISIL, the defense secretary said, including continued assistance to moderate forces in Syria. President Obama’s request to Congress for \$5 billion to establish an antiterrorism fund included \$500 million for moderate Syrian opposition forces who are also battling ISIL, Hagel noted.

The murder by ISIL forces of reporter James Foley is just one example of the ruthless, barbaric ideology of the group, he said.

“ISIL militants continue to massacre and enslave innocent people and persecute Iraq’s Sunni, Shia and Kurdish and minority populations,” the defense secretary said.

The U.S. doesn’t have the luxury to write ISIL off just because they’re operating in far-off countries, Hagel said. The organization is absolutely an imminent threat to the safety of America and Europe, he added.

*August 28, 2014*

Some of that immediacy comes from the numbers of westerners who have flocked to the region to join the terror group, Dempsey said.

“When we look at what they did to Mr. Foley, what they threatened to do to all Americans and Europeans, what they are doing now — I don’t know any other way to describe it other than barbaric,” Hagel said. “They have no standard of decency, of responsible human behavior, and I think the record’s clear on that.”

ISIL is the most sophisticated and well-funded terrorist organization the department has ever seen, the secretary said.

“They’re beyond just a terrorist group. They marry ideology [with] a sophistication of strategic and tactical military prowess,” he said.

To meet that threat, Hagel said, the department must prepare for everything.

“And the only way you do that,” he said, “is that you take a cold, steely, hard look at it and get ready.”

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