

INTERNATIONAL SECURITY UPDATE
December 23 - 30, 2014

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1. Airstrikes Continue Against ISIL in Syria, Iraq (12-29-2014)

From a Combined Joint Task Force Operation Inherent Resolve News Release

SOUTHWEST ASIA, Dec. 29, 2014 – U.S. and partner-nation military forces continued to attack Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant terrorists in Syria and Iraq today, Combined Joint Task Force Operation Inherent resolve officials reported.

Fighter, attack and remotely piloted aircraft conducted 12 airstrikes in Syria and six in Iraq, officials said.

Airstrikes in Syria

Here are the details of today's strikes in Syria:

- Near Kobani, 10 airstrikes destroyed 11 ISIL fighting positions, two ISIL buildings and an ISIL storage container and struck an ISIL tactical unit.
- Near Day az Zawr, an airstrike struck several ISIL buildings.
- Near Raqqah, an airstrike struck several ISIL buildings.

Airstrikes in Iraq

Here are the details of today's strikes in Iraq:

- Near Asad, two airstrikes destroyed two ISIL vehicles and struck an ISIL tactical unit.

- Near Sinjar, two airstrikes destroyed an ISIL vehicle.
- Near Mosul, two airstrikes destroyed two ISIL buildings and struck a large ISIL unit.

Part of Operation Inherent Resolve

The strikes were conducted as part of Operation Inherent Resolve, the operation to eliminate the ISIL terrorist group and the threat they pose to Iraq, the region and the wider international community, officials said, noting that strike assessments are based on initial reports.

Coalition nations conducting airstrikes in Iraq include the United States, Australia, Belgium, Canada, Denmark, France, Netherlands and the United Kingdom. Coalition nations conducting airstrikes in Syria include the United States, Bahrain, Jordan, Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates.

Related Sites:

[Special Report: Operation Inherent Resolve - Targeted Operations Against ISIL Terrorists](#)

2. Indonesia Requests U.S. Help in Search for Missing Aircraft (12-29-2014)

DoD News, Defense Media Activity

WASHINGTON, Dec. 29, 2014 – The Indonesian government has requested U.S. assistance in the search for AirAsia Flight 8501, according to a Defense Department statement released today.

“The details of that request, which was made through the U.S. State Department, are still being coordinated but could include some air, surface and sub-surface detection capabilities,” Pentagon Press Secretary Navy Rear Adm. John Kirby said in the statement. “We stand ready to assist in any way possible.”

The flight, which was scheduled from Surabaya, Indonesia, to Singapore, went missing Sunday.

3. U.S. Supports Efforts to Speed Ebola Vaccine Delivery (12-29-2014)

Washington — The U.S. government announced new projects December 23 to accelerate the development, evaluation and manufacturing of promising Ebola vaccines.

Contracts to speed further development of two vaccines, known as rVSV-ZEBOV-GP and ChAd3 EBO-Z, could pave the way for commercial-scale production of millions of vaccine doses if clinical trials prove safety and efficacy, officials of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) said in a news release.

Development of both vaccines is being accelerated because of the public health emergency in West Africa, HHS said.

“While we’re encouraged that traditional public health measures and supportive medical care are starting to control the outbreak in West Africa, the need for vaccines and therapeutics remains an urgent priority,” said HHS official Robin Robinson.

One contract is with GlaxoSmithKline in Philadelphia for 31 months and \$12.9 million, with options that would provide an additional \$16,000. The other contract is with BioProtection Systems

Corporation of Ames, Iowa, a subsidiary of NewLink Genetics Corporation, for approximately 14 months and \$30 million. It has options to extend the agreement 10 months and provide an additional \$41 million.

Under the agreements, GlaxoSmithKline will establish and validate master cell banks and virus seeds, which are the initial materials to start the manufacturing process. The company also will scale up the vaccine manufacturing process from the current pilot scale, which produces thousands of vaccine doses for early development activities, to commercial scale capable of producing millions of vaccine doses.

The manufacturing scale-up of any vaccine is a complex process and differs greatly from producing the small number of doses typically used for preclinical research or early-stage clinical trials, HHS said. Scale-up activities usually are undertaken in later phases of development as new drugs and vaccines move through clinical trials and are prepared for the commercial market. Normally, this takes two to three years. In the GlaxoSmithKline project, scale-up manufacturing will be compressed to nine to 12 months.

Under the second contract, BioProtection Systems will conduct clinical trials to determine the lowest dose at which the vaccine generates an effective immune response in people. Defining the lowest dose at which the vaccine works will enable the greatest number of people to be vaccinated. The company also will develop a more robust and reproducible vaccine manufacturing process. Options under the contract include scale-up manufacturing from pilot scale used in clinical trials to commercial scale.

Activities under both contracts will be critical to ensuring that there are sufficient doses if a vaccination campaign in West Africa becomes feasible and is determined to be an effective strategy, HHS said. Such an option first would require that clinical trials find the vaccines work and are safe.

In addition, HHS will support development by both companies of vaccine formulations to improve productivity and stability, including a formulation similar to freeze-drying, so the vaccine does not have to be kept frozen. This would make the vaccine easier to transport, store and use in the hot West African climate. Both companies also will improve assays for their experimental vaccines, which are critical analytical tests for determining such things as vaccine potency, as required by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration.

The HHS-sponsored projects with both companies complement the Phase 1 clinical trials supported by the U.S. National Institutes of Health and mark a transition to the next phase of vaccine development and planning for outbreak control in West Africa. Additional clinical trials of both vaccines are expected to begin with volunteers in West Africa in early 2015 to determine whether the vaccine prevents Ebola virus disease.

4. Obama, Hagel Mark End of Operation Enduring Freedom (12-28-2014)

DoD News, Defense Media Activity

WASHINGTON, Dec. 28, 2014 – President Barack Obama and Defense Secretary Chuck Hagel each issued statements today marking the end of the combat mission in Afghanistan.

After 13 years of combat operations, Operation Enduring Freedom drew to a close today in a ceremony at the International Security and Assistance Force headquarters in Kabul, Afghanistan.

“Today's ceremony in Kabul marks a milestone for our country,” Obama said. “For more than 13 years, ever since nearly 3,000 innocent lives were taken from us on 9/11, our nation has been at war in Afghanistan. Now, thanks to the extraordinary sacrifices of our men and women in uniform, our combat mission in Afghanistan is ending, and the longest war in American history is coming to a responsible conclusion.”

“At the end of this year,” Hagel said, “as our Afghan partners assume responsibility for the security of their country, the United States officially concludes Operation Enduring Freedom. ... In 2015, we begin our follow-on mission -- Operation Freedom's Sentinel -- to help secure and build upon the hard-fought gains of the last 13 years.”

Today, though, “we give thanks to our troops and intelligence personnel who have been relentless against the terrorists responsible for 9/11 -- devastating the core al-Qaida leadership, delivering justice to Osama bin Laden, disrupting terrorist plots and saving countless American lives,” the president said.

“We are safer, and our nation is more secure, because of their service,” he said. “At the same time, our courageous military and diplomatic personnel in Afghanistan -- along with our NATO allies and coalition partners--have helped the Afghan people reclaim their communities, take the lead for their own security, hold historic elections and complete the first democratic transfer of power in their country's history.”

“I want to express my deep gratitude to all U.S. personnel, both military and civilian, who have served in Afghanistan since 2001, many on multiple deployments,” Hagel said. “I also thank the thousands more who were a part of the mission at home and around the world. In fighting America's longest war, our people and their families have borne a heavy burden, and some paid the ultimate price.”

“We honor the profound sacrifices that have made this progress possible,” the president said. “We salute every American -- military and civilian, including our dedicated diplomats and development workers -- who have served in Afghanistan, many on multiple tours, just as their families have sacrificed at home.

“We pledge to give our many wounded warriors, with wounds seen and unseen, the world-class care and treatment they have earned. Most of all, we remember the more than 2,200 American patriots who made the ultimate sacrifice in Afghanistan, and we pledge to stand with their Gold Star families who need the everlasting love and support of a grateful nation.”

“Afghanistan remains a dangerous place, and the Afghan people and their security forces continue to make tremendous sacrifices in defense of their country,” Obama said. “At the invitation of the Afghan government, and to preserve the gains we have made together, the United States -- along with our allies and partners -- will maintain a limited military presence in Afghanistan.”

The United States will pursue two missions in Operation Freedom's Sentinel, Hagel said. “We will work with our allies and partners as part of NATO's Resolute Support mission to continue training, advising and assisting Afghan security forces. And we will continue our counterterrorism mission against the remnants of Al-Qaeda to ensure that Afghanistan is never again used to stage attacks against our homeland.”

“Our personnel will continue to face risks, but this reflects the enduring commitment of the United States to the Afghan people and to a united, secure and sovereign Afghanistan that is never again used as a source of attacks against our nation,” Obama said.

“These past 13 years have tested our nation and our military,” the president said. “But compared to the nearly 180,000 American troops in Iraq and Afghanistan when I took office, we now have fewer than 15,000 in those countries. Some 90 percent of our troops are home.

“Our military remains the finest in the world, and we will remain vigilant against terrorist attacks and in defense of the freedoms and values we hold dear. And with growing prosperity here at home, we enter a new year with new confidence, indebted to our fellow Americans in uniform who keep us safe and free.”

Related Sites:

[President Obama on End of Combat Mission in Afghanistan](#) (12-28-2014)

[Transition ceremony kicks off Resolute Support Mission in Afghanistan](#) (12-28-2014)

5. NATO Secretary General's statement on a new chapter in Afghanistan (12-28-2014)

At the end of this year, we complete our combat mission in Afghanistan and open a new chapter in our relationship with Afghanistan.

The security of Afghanistan will be fully in the hands of the country’s 350,000 Afghan soldiers and police. But NATO Allies, together with many partner nations, will remain to train, advise and assist them. This is what NATO and Afghan leaders agreed together. It has been made possible by the courage and capability of the Afghan National Security Forces, and by the dedication of the international forces who helped train them over the past years.

Many challenges remain, and there is much work still to do. The Afghan security forces will continue to need our help as they develop.

Our new mission, “Resolute Support,” will bring together around 12,000 men and women from NATO Allies and 14 partner nations. The mission is based on a request from the Afghan government and the Status of Forces Agreement between NATO and Afghanistan. The United Nations Security Council unanimously welcomed the agreement between Afghanistan and NATO to establish the mission and stressed the importance of continued international support for the stability of Afghanistan.

We will also contribute to the financing of the Afghan security forces, and build an Enduring Partnership with Afghanistan which reflects our joint interests, shapes our joint cooperation and contributes to our shared security.

For over a decade, NATO and our partners have stood with Afghanistan. 51 nations have contributed forces to our effort – over a quarter of the countries of the world. The International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) has been the largest military coalition in recent history and represents an unprecedented international effort. The mandate of the United Nations Security Council was to help the Afghan authorities provide security across the country and develop new Afghan forces.

This mandate was carried out at great cost, but with great success. We will always remember the sacrifice of international and Afghan forces, who deserve our respect and our gratitude.

Thanks to the remarkable effort of our forces, we have achieved what we set out to do. We have made our own nations safer, by denying safe haven to international terrorists. We have made

Afghanistan stronger, by building up from scratch strong security forces. Together, we have created the conditions for a better future for millions of Afghan men, women and children.

Related Articles:

[NATO-led Resolute Support Mission in Afghanistan](#)

Related Sites:

[NATO and Afghanistan](#)

6. "A new chapter in Afghan-NATO ties" (12-24-2014)

Op-ed by NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg for Pajhwok Afghan News

As we complete the international combat mission at the end of 2014, we open a new chapter in the relationship between NATO and Afghanistan.

The security of Afghanistan will be fully in the hands of the country's 350,000 Afghan soldiers and police. But NATO Allies, together with many partner nations, will remain to train, advise and assist them. We are not walking away.

This transition is what NATO and Afghan leaders agreed together. It has been made possible by the courage and capability of the Afghan National Security Forces, and by the dedication of the international forces who helped train them over the past years.

In the recent weeks, we have seen horrendous attacks in Kabul, Paktika and other parts of Afghanistan, which killed many Afghan civilians, including children. Brave Afghan soldiers and police lost their lives to keep their country secure. We condemn these inhumane acts in the strongest terms. And to the perpetrators of those acts we say: your efforts are in vain.

The Afghan security forces are the pride and the protection of Afghanistan. They are a force for all Afghans, and all Afghans can be proud of them. And we stand by them.

Of course, many challenges remain, and there is much work still to do. The Afghan security forces will continue to need our help as they develop. And we will continue to provide that help.

Our new mission, "Resolute Support," will bring together around 12,000 men and women from many parts of the world. The 28 NATO Allies will contribute in different ways, joined by 14 partner nations. The United States will be in the lead to train, advise and assist in the south and east of Afghanistan. Germany will be in the lead in the north. Italy in the west. And Turkey in the capital.

Our mission is based on a request from the Afghan government and the Status of Forces Agreement between NATO and Afghanistan. Moreover, the United Nations Security Council unanimously welcomed the agreement between Afghanistan and NATO to establish the mission and stressed the importance of continued international support for the stability of Afghanistan.

We will also contribute to the financing of the Afghan forces. President Ashraf Ghani and Chief Executive Abdullah Abdullah have pledged that international funding will be handled efficiently, transparently and accountably. That is important to our tax-payers, and we count on the National Unity Government to live up to that promise.

Beyond forces and funding, NATO and Afghanistan will build something still stronger: an enduring partnership which reflects our joint interests, shapes our joint cooperation and contributes to our shared security. We will enhance practical cooperation, including building the capacity of Afghan security institutions, and hold political dialogue and regular consultations on a range of topics of mutual interest.

We discussed this together with President Ghani and Chief Executive Abdullah at the meeting of NATO foreign ministers in Brussels this month. Together, we agreed to set up a joint task force to begin putting the partnership into practice for the benefit of our nations.

As we start to write this new chapter in our partnership, it is also the time to look back. For over a decade, NATO and our partners have stood with Afghanistan. 51 different nations have contributed – over a quarter of the countries of the world. The International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) has been the largest military coalition in recent history and represents an unprecedented international effort. The mandate of the United Nations Security Council was to help the Afghan authorities provide security across the country and develop new Afghan forces.

This mandate was carried out at great cost, but with great success. We will always remember the sacrifice of international and Afghan forces, who deserve our respect and our gratitude.

Thanks to the remarkable effort of our forces, we have achieved what we set out to do. We have made our own nations safer, by denying safe haven to international terrorists. We have made Afghanistan stronger, by building up from scratch 350,000 strong security forces. And together, we have created the conditions for a better future for millions of Afghan men, women and children.

I visited Afghanistan not long ago. I saw the quiet pride of ISAF soldiers about what has been achieved, despite so many challenges. I saw the strong determination of Afghan forces. And I spoke to young Afghans, who have high hopes for their future.

Afghanistan is already a different country from what it was thirteen years ago. It is worth remembering what the situation was over a decade ago, after the dark days of the Taliban. There was little government and little security. The ministries in Kabul lacked not just telephones and computers, but even desks and chairs.

Now, the Afghan army and police are over 350,000 strong. Afghanistan has made the largest percentage gain of any country in the world in basic health and development indicators. Maternal mortality is going down, life expectancy is rising, and there is a vibrant media scene. This year millions of people exercised their right to vote, and the National Unity Government was established.

So despite all the challenges, Afghans now live longer, have more opportunities to work, and have a better chance of a better future than at any time in their history. And there is a clear government commitment to continue vital reforms, including in the areas of good governance, accountability, and human rights, including rights for women.

As 2015 dawns, it brings a new responsibility for Afghanistan, a new mission for NATO, and a new degree of partnership between us. We have stood shoulder to shoulder for over a decade to maintain and enhance security for the Afghan people and our own citizens. Now we are proud to write together a new chapter in our relationship. For the security of Afghanistan, and our own.

An Article by NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg to Pajhwok Afghan News

7. Defense.gov Launches 2014 Year-in-Review Microsites (12-23-2014)

By Army Sgt. 1st Class Tyrone C. Marshall Jr.
DoD News, Defense Media Activity

WASHINGTON, Dec. 23, 2014 – The Defense Department launched its annual Year in Review and Year in Photos special reports on its flagship website today to showcase the work and accomplishments of the department’s military and civilian workforce in 2014.

The special reports on <http://www.defense.gov/> highlight the global efforts of DoD’s workforce of more than 1.4 million men and women on active duty, 1.1 million in the reserves and National Guard, and 718,000 civilian personnel, as they defended the nation, providing safety and security for U.S. national interests domestically and abroad throughout the year.

John Valceanu, chief of the Defense.gov news content management and digital print teams, discussed the project’s rollout and how it came together.

“We’ve been doing year-in-review specials for a few years now, and I think this is, by far, the best one we’ve done so far,” he said. “I’m really proud of the team being able to create such a high-quality product.”

The products are a testament to the work of Linda Hosek, the content manager who pulled it together, and John Kerr, the designer who developed the microsite, Valceanu added.

Updates on Critical Issues

The Year in Review microsite highlights some of DoD’s most critical issues from 2014, ranging from sequestration and budgeting concerns to the department’s Ebola response in West Africa.

Along with national security issues such as the fight against the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant, it also covers more poignant moments for the country, such as the 2014 Warrior Games.

The Year in Photos special showcases military photographers’ work as they captured a visual record of the department’s operations through compelling imagery around the world -- from combat operations in Iraq and Afghanistan to wildfire fighting in California to military athletes competing for the right to represent their branches of service.

The special reports also give the department a chance to highlight the work of the DoD News Digital Print writers who have told the story of the department’s activities throughout the year, Valceanu said.

Superior Design

The design of this year’s reports is superior to past years, he added, and has helped to better integrate the department’s imagery and stories.

“They’re separate pieces of the same project,” he said, “so visitors can browse through photos and look at great imagery collected from throughout the year.” Visitors can also read articles, Valceanu added, to find out more about specific topics.

The special reports provide glimpses of DoD at its best as it engaged challenges around the world and present a more personal view of service members as they embrace their passions, show their competitive spirits and demonstrate compassion, Valceanu said.

“This has been a very good year for Defense.gov,” he said, noting that a mid-year redesign of the site’s home page resulted in more page views of its articles, photos, photo essays and other features.

“I think this Year in Review project is a fitting way to cap what has been a very successful year for us,” he said. “And we look forward to continuing to evolve and delivering even better products in the coming years.”

Related Sites:

[Special Report: Year in Review](#)

[Special Report: Year in Photos](#)

[The Defense Department on Facebook](#)

[The Defense Department on Twitter](#)

[DoD News on Twitter](#)

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