

January 30, 2015

Section 1209 Report: Department of Defense Assistance to Appropriately Vetted Elements of the Syrian Opposition (U)

(U) This report is provided consistent with Section 1209(b) of the Carl Levin and Howard P. "Buck" McKeon National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2015 (Public Law 113-291), which provides that not later than 15 days prior to providing assistance under Section 1209(a), the Secretary of Defense, in coordination with the Secretary of State, shall submit to the appropriate congressional committees and the leadership of the House of Representatives and Senate a report that contains a description of: (1) the plan for providing such assistance; (2) the requirements and process used to determine appropriately vetted recipients; and (3) the mechanisms and procedures that will be used to monitor and report on unauthorized end-use of provided training and equipment and other violations of relevant law by appropriately vetted recipients. Section 1209(c) provides that the plan for providing such assistance shall include, at a minimum, a description of: (1) the goals and objectives of assistance; (2) the concept of operations, timelines, and types of training, equipment, stipends, sustainment, construction, and supplies to be provided; (3) the roles and contributions of partner nations; (4) the number and role of United States armed forces personnel involved; (5) any additional military support and sustainment activities; and (6) any other relevant details.

(U) Section 1209 provides that the report is to be submitted in an unclassified form, with a classified annex as appropriate. Due to the sensitive nature of the material, much of the report is classified. For the sake of clarity, the classified annex includes the complete report (classified and unclassified information).

I. (U) Plan for Providing Assistance.**a. *(U) Goals and Objectives:***

(U) The Department of Defense (DoD) will assist appropriately vetted elements of the Syrian opposition and other appropriately vetted Syrian groups and individuals to: 1) defend the Syrian people from attacks by the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL), and secure territory controlled by the Syrian opposition; 2) protect the United States, its friends and allies, and the Syrian people from the threats posed by terrorists in Syria; and 3) promote the conditions for a negotiated settlement to end the conflict in Syria.

(U) To achieve these goals, DoD will, in collaboration with coalition partners, recruit, train, equip, and sustain appropriately vetted Syrian opposition forces. As the DoD-trained Syrian opposition forces develop, other components of the U.S. and coalition counter-ISIL strategy will inflict progressive damage on ISIL by contributing to the effectiveness of Iraqi security operations, stemming the flow of foreign fighters into the region, reducing ISIL's financial support, and contesting ISIL ideology throughout the region. Success in these efforts will set the conditions for the trained Syrian opposition forces to be increasingly effective in combating ISIL and helping to bring about ISIL's defeat.

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b. (U) *The Concept Of Operations, Timelines, and Types of Training, Equipment, Stipends, Sustainment, Construction, and Supplies to be Provided:*

(U) Concept of Operations. The program of support for moderate Syrian opposition forces consists of four interrelated efforts: build, employ, stabilize, and expand. Through the establishment of a Combined Joint Interagency Task Force (CJIATF), the United States and coalition partners will train, equip, and otherwise assist in developing Syrian opposition forces that will counter ISIL successfully.

(U) Building the capability of Syrian opposition forces will require recruiting sufficient numbers of fighters and robust screening to mitigate the threat of unsuitable individuals that could enter the program. It will also be necessary to prepare adequate training facilities, implement a curriculum that develops effective ground combat soldiers and an effective and reliable chain of command, and procure sufficient materiel to provide the trained forces with a qualitative advantage over the enemy.

(U) The integration of U.S. departments and agencies and partner nation support is essential to the success of the program. DoD has identified several key U.S. department and agency partners to fill roles that are not inherently military in nature. In these roles, U.S. departments and agencies will contribute a wealth of knowledge and experience to advise DoD in support of operations.

(U) The DoD program expands existing U.S. non-military support beyond currently provided non-military aid and civil sector-training to the Syrian opposition. The Department of State (DOS) and U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) have established relationships with Syrian opposition entities. These entities will facilitate communication and the flow of DoD support. DoD will leverage this knowledge and expertise and synchronize support across DoD, other U.S. departments and agencies, and non-governmental organizations.

(U) Timeline. This program will require a robust recruiting effort, rigorous screening and vetting, adequate training facilities, an effective curriculum, timely procurement of materiel, and appropriate military support.

(U) Upon completion of this initial training, members of each class will return to their opposition commanders in Syria. As additional classes graduate, the collective skills and strength of DoD-trained opposition forces will increase, enabling the forces to contest ISIL.

(U) Types of Training. DoD will provide scalable, tailored training based on the assessed capabilities of Syrian opposition trainees, and adapted to fit the threats and geography that opposition forces are likely to face in Syria. Classes required for all trainees include the law of armed conflict (LOAC), chain of command, rudimentary medical care, communications, and small arms training.

(U) DoD anticipates some attrition during the training course. A higher attrition rate is expected during advanced skills or leadership training, which requires a higher degree of trainee aptitude.

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Counterintelligence, medical or psychological screening failures, and those who self-eliminate from training, will also be factors affecting attrition rates.

(U) DoD will implement a curriculum that develops effective fighting forces and fosters an effective and reliable chain of command. Further, DoD will procure sufficient materiel that will ultimately provide the trained Syrian opposition with an advantage over ISIL. Once forces re-enter Syria, their immediate mission will be to strengthen the security of existing areas currently held by the Syrian opposition. Over time, DoD expects to train these opposition groups in how to organize themselves into a force that can operate from relatively stable areas and over time conduct expeditionary, offensive operations to seize territory currently controlled by ISIL. Success in these efforts will set the conditions for the vetted Syrian opposition to defend existing Syrian opposition territory and eventually to initiate offensive military actions in support of the broader campaign to defeat ISIL.

(U) Equipment and Supplies. The provision of equipment sets and supplies will vary depending on capabilities needed and the combat conditions these forces may face in Syria. Non-military equipment sets may include uniforms, hygiene kits, medical equipment, communications equipment, food, and vehicles. DoD will also issue military equipment sets.

(U) Stipends. DoD will provide cash stipends to DoD-trained Syrian opposition leaders during and following the training.

(U) Sustainment. Once operational inside Syria, the DoD-trained opposition forces will require persistent replenishment of critical supplies to sustain combat operations. DoD plans to sustain the trained forces and will validate equipment, munitions, and supply requirements for procurement.

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(U) Construction. DoD has assessed all proposed training locations, including final design and cost estimates.

(U) The Roles and Contributions of Partner Nations:

(U) Partner nations will play a critical role in the program. Partner nations have offered training sites, logistical support for trainers and recruits, and personnel to assist U.S. forces with training. The support provided by partner nations will vary, but DoD has identified specific equipment and capabilities that partner nations can provide to augment or replace the support provided by the United States. These include, but are not limited to, specific weapon systems that the United States does not maintain in its stocks, life support for program trainees and U.S. personnel, civilian vehicles, airlift, and potentially some forms of financial support for trained forces.

(U) The Number and Role of U.S. Armed Forces Personnel:

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(U) DoD anticipates the total number of U.S. Armed Forces personnel required to support this program will number fewer than 1,000 in fiscal year 2015.

II. (U) Vetting Requirements and Process.

(U) DoD intends to conduct ongoing vetting of Syrian opposition forces. The vetting process will begin when recruits are identified and will continue throughout the training process and during the employment of trained forces. The objectives of DoD's initial screening process, before individuals receive U.S. assistance, will be to eliminate any threats to U.S. and coalition partner forces associated with the assistance program, and to prevent individuals with ties to terrorist organizations, militias aligned with or supporting the Government of Syria, groups associated with the Government of Iran, organized criminal networks, and foreign intelligence services from participating in the program. DoD will also screen for gross human rights abuses. DoD will use long-standing U.S. military procedures and practices for vetting international forces, as well as processes created by the U.S. Intelligence Community and other U.S. departments and agencies. DoD will also solicit sustained assistance from coalition partners and constantly monitor and assess trainees throughout the training process and once they are back in Syria.

III. (U) Mechanisms and Procedures for Monitoring and Reporting.

(U) DoD personnel will regularly monitor DoD-trained Syrian opposition forces to assess battlefield performance and to identify unauthorized use of U.S.-provided assistance, human rights abuses, or the contravention of LOAC principles.

(U) See the classified annex for additional details.