

FACT SHEET: Strategy to Counter the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL)

 obamawhitehouse.archives.gov/the-press-office/2014/09/10/fact-sheet-strategy-counter-islamic-state-iraq-and-levant-isil

September 10, 2014

The White House

Office of the Press Secretary

For Immediate Release

September 10, 2014

The Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) poses a clear threat to the people of Iraq and Syria, and to the broader Middle East, as well as U.S. persons, allies and interests in the region. Left unchecked, ISIL could pose a growing threat beyond the region, including to the U.S. homeland.

The United States is meeting this threat with strength and resolve. In recent weeks, we have increased intelligence resources devoted to the threat and sent U.S. personnel to assess the situation on the ground. We have responded with immediate action to protect Americans in Iraq and to prevent large-scale humanitarian catastrophes, including by conducting over 150 successful airstrikes in Iraq. These strikes have kept our personnel and facilities in Baghdad and Erbil safe, killed ISIL fighters, destroyed ISIL equipment, protected Iraqi critical infrastructure, and broken ISIL sieges against an Iraqi city and civilians trapped on a mountain. Along with dozens of international partners, we have provided material support for Iraqi forces to support their fight against ISIL. Our strikes and resupply efforts have enabled Iraqi forces to take the fight to ISIL on the ground, reclaim key territory, and saved thousands of innocent lives.

Our goal is clear: to degrade and ultimately destroy ISIL through a comprehensive and sustained counterterrorism strategy so that it's no longer a threat to Iraq, the region, the United States, and our partners. To achieve this goal, our strategy will be underpinned by a strong coalition of regional and international partners who are willing to commit resources and will to this long-term endeavor. Dozens of countries are already contributing in Iraq – from military to humanitarian support – and in coming days and weeks we will work to strengthen and expand that coalition.

In concert with our coalition partners, the United States will carry out a comprehensive strategy to defeat ISIL and deny them safe-haven. That strategy harnesses all elements of national power and features the following core elements:

Supporting Effective Governance in Iraq: We have made clear that additional U.S. action depended on Iraq forming an inclusive government, because only a united Iraq -- with a government in Baghdad that has support from all of Iraq's communities -- can

defeat ISIL. A new Iraqi government was formally sworn in on September 8 and we will support it in efforts to govern inclusively and to take significant, concrete steps to address the legitimate grievances and needs of all Iraqis.

Denying ISIL Safe-Haven: The Iraqi Government is taking the fight to ISIL, and will ultimately be the one to defeat it in Iraq. But our Iraqi and regional partners need our support and unique capabilities to blunt ISIL's advance. The President announced that we will conduct a systematic campaign of airstrikes against these terrorists. Working with the Iraqi government, we will expand our efforts beyond protecting our own people and humanitarian missions so that we're hitting ISIL targets as Iraqi forces go on offense. The President also made clear that we will hunt down terrorists who threaten our country, wherever they are. The President will not hesitate to take direct military action against ISIL terrorists in Syria and in Iraq. We will degrade ISIL's leadership, logistical and operational capability, and deny it sanctuary and resources to plan, prepare and execute attacks. Simply put, ISIL will find no safe-haven.

Building Partner Capacity: We will build the capability and capacity of our partners in the region to sustain an effective long-term campaign against ISIL. The President announced that he will send an additional 475 U.S. service members to Iraq to support Iraqi and Kurdish forces with training, intelligence and equipment. In addition to providing weapons, ammunition and equipment, U.S. Special Operations Forces (SOF) will train and advise Iraqi forces, including Kurdish forces, improving their ability to plan, lead and conduct operations against ISIL. Further, the new Iraqi government has asked for help forming National Guard units that would be recruited locally and be responsible for protecting their own communities and securing areas freed from ISIL's control - a step that, along with long overdue political reforms, can drive a wedge between ISIL and Sunnis who have been alienated by their central government.

The President is also calling on Congress to provide additional authorities and resources to train and equip Syrian opposition fighters in the Continuing Resolution they are debating this work period, so they can defend themselves and their neighborhoods against ISIL incursions and ultimately push back on ISIL forces and the Assad regime. We will strengthen the opposition as the best counterweight to extremists like ISIL, while pursuing the political solution necessary to solve Syria's crisis once and for all.

The growing and evolving nature of the ISIL threat underscores the importance of the Counterterrorism Partnerships Fund (CTPF). The CTPF request for \$5 billion would allow us to train, build capacity, and facilitate support for partner countries on the front lines of countering shared terrorist threats, both in the region and beyond. The CTPF includes \$500 million for a Department of Defense program to train and equip the Syrian opposition as described above and \$1 billion to build resiliency in the states neighboring Syria to ensure they can continue to counter threats to their internal stability and to support communities that are contending with refugees.

Enhancing Intelligence Collection on ISIL: Continuing to gain more fidelity on ISIL's capabilities, plans, and intentions is central to our strategy to degrade and ultimately destroy the group. Intelligence, Surveillance, and Reconnaissance flights and

other important efforts will strengthen our ability to understand this threat, as well as to share vital information with our Iraqi and other regional partners to enable them to effectively counter ISIL.

Disrupting ISIL's Finances: ISIL's expansion over the past year has given it access to significant and diverse sources of funding. The U.N. Security Council resolution that passed unanimously in August demonstrated the broad international consensus to disrupt ISIL's finances. We are already working aggressively with our partners on a coordinated approach that includes: reducing ISIL's revenue from oil and assets it has plundered; limiting ISIL's ability to extort local populations; stemming ISIL's gains from kidnapping for ransom; and disrupting the flow of external donations to the group. Our domestic laws also provide additional tools in this effort, enabling us to sanction or prosecute those who fund ISIL's activities.

Exposing ISIL's True Nature: Clerics around the world have spoken up in recent weeks to highlight ISIL's hypocrisy, condemning the group's barbarity and criticizing its self-proclaimed "caliphate." We will work with our partners throughout the Muslim world to highlight ISIL's hypocrisy and counter its false claim to be acting in the name of religion.

Disrupting the Flow of Foreign Fighters: Foreign terrorist fighters are ISIL's lifeblood, and a global security threat—with citizens of nearly 80 countries filling its ranks. Over 100 foreign fighters from the United States have traveled or attempted to travel to the conflict. On September 24, the United States will convene an historic Summit-level meeting of the UN Security Council, focused on this issue.

Protecting the Homeland: We will continue to use the criminal justice system as a critical tool in our counterterrorism toolbox. Federal criminal laws provide a sound basis to prosecute those who provide material support to ISIL or who conspire with ISIL to plot attacks at home or abroad. With respect to aviation security, we will work with air carriers to implement responsible threat-based security and screening requirements, and provide additional screening to individuals suspected of affiliation with ISIL. Finally, we will counter violent extremism here at home, including tailored domestic programs to prevent violent extremism and radicalization in order to intervene with at-risk individuals before they become radicalized toward violence and decide to travel abroad to Syria and Iraq to join ISIL.

Humanitarian Support: We and our partners will continue to provide humanitarian assistance to the displaced and vulnerable in Iraq and Syria. We will also continue to work with host governments to mitigate the humanitarian and economic effects of the conflict in neighboring countries, recognizing that the refugee crisis calls on our common humanity and presents a significant challenge to regional stability. As ISIL seeks to destroy the diversity of the territories it terrorizes, we will continue to work to help prevent mass atrocities, particularly against vulnerable religious and ethnic minorities.