May 10, 2018

The Honorable James Mattis
Secretary
Department of Defense
1400 Defense Pentagon
Washington, D.C. 20301-1400

Dear Secretary Mattis:

As members of the Subcommittee on National Security, we are writing to express our strong objection to the Trump Administration’s most recent decision to redact U.S. troop numbers for Iraq, Syria, and Afghanistan from the Defense Department’s quarterly public reports on U.S. personnel strength. This data was publicly available to Congress and the American people throughout the Bush and Obama Administrations and should continue to be so under the Trump Administration, as it has facilitated the development of policies and measures designed to maximize the protection of U.S. Forces deployed overseas. In the interest of continued force protection, transparency, and accountability relating to our military presence in key combat zones, we respectfully request that you immediately reverse this policy.

According to press accounts, the Defense Manpower Data Center “stripped” total U.S. troop numbers for Iraq, Syria, and Afghanistan from its quarterly report in December on the number of active duty, reserve, National Guard, and civilian personnel assigned in the U.S. and overseas. In place of this data, the Defense Department left “blank spaces where Iraq, Syria, and Afghanistan figures used to be” and inserted a proviso indicating that, “with ongoing operations, any questions concerning DoD personnel strength numbers are deferred to OSD Public Affairs/Joint Chiefs of Staff.” The Department also reportedly redacted personnel numbers for Iraq, Syria, and Afghanistan from last September’s report. Moreover, it is our understanding that the Defense Department has instructed the Defense Manpower Data Center to count personnel going forward based on their permanently assigned unit locations. As a result, thousands of overseas personnel will be reported as stationed in the U.S. when they are actually deployed overseas.¹

This data has been publicly available for more than a decade and provides Congress and the American people with critical information pertaining to Operation Enduring Freedom,

The Honorable James Mattis
Page 2

Operation Iraqi Freedom, Operation Freedom’s Sentinel, Operation Inherent Resolve, and other missions. An accurate and transparent accounting of deployed U.S. troops has enabled Congress to make better-informed decisions regarding the equipment and personnel necessary to maximize U.S. force protection in combat zones. It has also underscored whether our military strategies in Iraq, Afghanistan, Syria, and other areas are achieving their desired results. As you may recall, the U.S. troop figures released in November served to highlight significant discrepancies between the actual number of troops on the ground in Iraq, Syria, and Afghanistan and the much lower, artificial “force management levels” publicly acknowledged by the Pentagon. As a result, the Defense Department undertook a policy review to ensure greater accuracy in reporting U.S. troop deployment figures.

As Secretary of Defense, you have underscored your commitment “to developing a more transparent accounting of our troops in the field.” We believe that an immediate reversal of the decision by the Defense Department to redact key data on U.S. personnel strength would help fulfill your commitment and greatly enhance transparency and accountability in this area.

We respectfully request the courtesy of a reply by Wednesday, May 23, 2018. Thank you in advance for your consideration of this letter.

Sincerely,

Rep. Stephen F. Lynch
Ranking Member

Rep. Mark DeSaulnier

Rep. Elijan E. Cummings
Ex Officio

Rep. Peter Welch

Rep. Jimmy Gomez

---


cc: The Honorable Trey Gowdy, Chairman

The Honorable Ron DeSantis, Chairman
Subcommittee on National Security
The Honorable Stephen F. Lynch
Ranking Member
Subcommittee on National Security
Committee on Oversight and Government Reform
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Representative Lynch,

I received your May 10, 2018 letter concerning the Defense Manpower Data Center (DMDC) quarterly reports. Detailed information regarding the number of U.S. Forces in Afghanistan, Iraq, and Syria is provided to congressional committees and members on a regular basis, in a variety of formats and frequencies as noted below:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Required by</th>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Type</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
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<tr>
<td>War Powers Act</td>
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<td>Speaker, President Pro Temore, HFAC, SFRC, HASC, SASC, HAC-D, SAC-D</td>
<td>POTUS</td>
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<td>Monthly</td>
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<td>OSD Joint Staff</td>
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<td>N/A</td>
<td>Iraq, Syria</td>
<td>* Operations Update</td>
<td>4-6 Wks</td>
<td>HASC, SASC, HAC-D, SAC-D, SACP Professional Staff</td>
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* Exact numbers reported/briefed  ** Approximate numbers reported/briefed

The DMDC removed specific numbers of military and civilian personnel from its public reporting and now directs readers to the Department of Defense Public Affairs office which provides current information on military operations to the public (as indicated above). This includes publicly reported approximate numbers which omit certain personnel deployed for sensitive missions. I am confident that these approximations appropriately balance the need for transparency with the need to protect sensitive information that could advantage our enemy. Of course the Congress is provided fully detailed accounting in classified reporting that is kept current.
This change optimizes how we manage, account for, and accurately report force levels consistent with operational security. It increases the Department's transparency and consistency by publicly reporting certain previously undisclosed temporary duty personnel deployed in Afghanistan, Iraq, and Syria without inhibiting commanders' flexibility to adapt to battlefield conditions.

I remain committed to ensuring the Department conducts its operations as transparently as possible, balancing public release of military information with the requirement for operational security. The Department regularly provides comprehensive, classified details of operational force levels to the congressional defense committees in closed briefings and, if asked, will brief any member of Congress.

Sincerely,

[Signature]

cc:
The Honorable Peter Welch
    Member, Subcommittee on National Security
The Honorable Mark DeSaulnier
    Member, Subcommittee on National Security
The Honorable Jimmy Gomez
    Member, Subcommittee on National Security
The Honorable Elijah Cummings  
Ranking Member  
Committee on Oversight and Government Reform  
U.S. House of Representatives  
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Representative Cummings,

I received your May 10, 2018 letter concerning the Defense Manpower Data Center (DMDC) quarterly reports. Detailed information regarding the number of U.S. Forces in Afghanistan, Iraq, and Syria is provided to congressional committees and members on a regular basis, in a variety of formats and frequencies as noted below:

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Sincerely,

[signature]

cc:
The Honorable Trey Gowdy
   Chairman
   Committee on Oversight and Government Reform
   U.S. House of Representatives
Secretary of Defense Immediate Office Correspondence Routing/Comment Form

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>OSD Number:</th>
<th>071563-17</th>
<th>Subject: [S//REL] Revised OIR Force Management Construct</th>
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<td>Suspense:</td>
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- ExecSec MA & ExecSec Date: 9/14/17
- [S//REL] Policy seeks SD approval of the plan for OIR (TAB B) to implement the new force management construct.

- (S//NF) The proposed implementation plan.

- (S//NF) Under the new construct, total force numbers to be publically disclosed:
  1. Iraq - 5200
  2. Syria - 2000
  3. Afghanistan - 11,000

- SecDef

* Approved 1/6 - SEE NOTES

ExecSec Final Distribution

- SOM Date: 9/17/17
- Hold for Rollout / Hill Notification
- PDF to:
  - Distro / File
  - Other
SECRET//REL TO USA.FVEY

ACTION MEMO

FOR: SECRETARY OF DEFENSE

FROM: Robert Story Karem, Performing the Duties of the Under Secretary of Defense (Policy)

SUBJECT: (S//REL) Revised OIR Force Management Construct

PURPOSE: (S//REL) This memo seeks your approval of the plan for Operation INHERENT RESOLVE (TAB B) to implement the new force management construct.

COORDINATION: (S//REL) Policy coordinated the implementation plan with OGC, OSD PA, OSD I.A. and the Joint Staff.

BLUF: (S//REL) Your signature on this memo would approve the OIR force management implementation plan.

DISCUSSION: (S//REL) The plan...

Your memo to APNSA on April 10 (TAB C) and your internal DoD memo on April 26 (TAB D) provided that...

(b) (1) (A), (b) (1) (D)
RECOMMENDATION: (U) Sign below to approve the implementation plan for OIR (TAB B).

Approve: \[\checkmark\] Disapprove: \\
Other: \\

Attachments:
TAB A: Summary of Changes to OIR and OFS Force Reporting
TAB B: OIR Force Management Implementation Plan
TAB C: Memo to APNSA on Force Management in Iraq and Syria, April 10, 2017
TAB D: Memo to DoD on FMH Authority for OIR, April 26, 2017

(b) (1) (A), (b) (1) (D)
OIR Force Management Implementation Plan

(S//REL) Purpose. On June 10, 2017, the Secretary approved the Joint Staff proposal to transition the Operation INHERENT RESOLVE (OIR) force management construct...
Policy Coordination Sheet

**Subject:** Revised OIR Force Management Construct  
**Control Number:** *USP071657-17*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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<th>Name</th>
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<tr>
<td>PDASD ISA</td>
<td>Katie Wheelbarger</td>
<td>8/18/2017</td>
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<td>PDO/GC OGC</td>
<td>Paul Koffsky</td>
<td>8/17/2017</td>
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<td>ASD OSD/PA</td>
<td>Dana White</td>
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<td>Pete Giambastiani</td>
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<td>VDJS/Joint Staff</td>
<td>RADM Mike Dumont</td>
<td>8/17/2017</td>
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</table>
SECRET//REL TO USA, FVEY

ACTION MEMO

FOR: SECRETARY OF DEFENSE

FROM: Robert Story Karem, Performing the Duties of the Under Secretary of Defense

SUBJECT: (S//REL) Revised OFS Force Management Construct

PURPOSE: (S//REL) This memo seeks your approval of the plan for Operation FREEDOM SENTINEL (TAB B) to implement the new force management construct (b) (1) (A), (b) (1) (D)

COORDINATION: (S//REL) Policy coordinated the implementation plan with OGC, OSD PA, OSD LA, and the Joint Staff.

BLUF: (S//REL) Your signature on this memo would approve the OFS force management implementation plan.

DISCUSSION: (S//REL) The implementation plan identifies how the new force management construct (b) (1) (A), (b) (1) (D)

RECOMMENDATION: (U) Sign below to approve the implementation plan for OFS (TAB B).

Approve: 

Disapprove: 

Other: 

Derived from: Multiple Sources
Declassify on: August 29, 2042

SECRET//REL TO USA, FVEY

OSD071485-17/CMD072172-17

20-F-0997 015
Attachments:
TAB A: Summary of Changes to OIR and OFS Force Reporting
TAB B: OFS Force Management Implementation Plan
TAB C: Coordination
SECRET

(S) Summary of Changes to Force Reporting

(b) (1) (A), (b) (1) (D)

Derived from: Multiple Sources
Declassify on: August 17, 2042

OSD Policy ISA/ME
Phone Number: b) (6)
OFS Force Management Implementation Plan

(S//REL) Purpose. On June 10, 2017, the Secretary approved the Joint Staff proposal to transition the Operation INHERENT RESOLVE (OIR) force management construct.