

# United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

November 2, 2015

The Honorable Ashton Carter  
Secretary of Defense  
1000 Defense Pentagon  
Washington, DC 20301

Dear Secretary Carter:

We write to you today to raise concern regarding the coalition effort to defeat the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) and support to our Iraqi Kurdish partners.

We recently returned from meeting with U.S. servicemembers and foreign leaders throughout Iraq and Afghanistan. Unfortunately, the picture provided to us in theater is starkly different from that which is provided to the American people, and to us as elected officials in the Senate and members of the Senate Armed Services Committee. Specifically, it does not appear that coalition efforts are having the Administration's desired "degrade and destroy" effects against ISIL.

While visiting Iraq, our meeting with foreign officials painted a grim picture of the U.S. and coalition effort against ISIL. In particular, our time on the ground did not alleviate our long-standing concerns about inadequate U.S. support to the Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG) and their Peshmerga forces.

While meeting with our KRG allies in Erbil, we were again informed the military support promised to them from Baghdad is far from being provided, and the level of support, such as adequate stocks of small arms ammunition, is not enough to effectively defend their territory against ISIL. Furthermore, the coalition's piecemeal supply of various Russian and NATO weapons and ammunition makes resupply extremely difficult for Peshmerga forces—as it would for U.S. forces if faced with a similar logistical situation. The KRG also informed us that they require heavier weapons, more equipment in general, and protective gear—as already provided to ISF units for a number of years—to more effectively defend their territory. As this is something we specifically worked to achieve via the NDAA, we have heightened concerns for the needs of our allies on the front lines against ISIL.

In conclusion, we ask the Department to strengthen its support to the KRG based on the troubling operational situation in large portions of Iraq, the dedication of the Kurdish Peshmerga in their fight against ISIL, and KRG support provided to the over 1.6 million displaced persons

within their territory. Specifically we ask your views on what additional measures the United States can take to support our Kurdish allies.

Sincerely,

  
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Joni K. Ernst  
United States Senator

  
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M. Michael Rounds  
United States Senator