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Department of Defense Contractor and Troop Levels in Iraq and Afghanistan: 2007-2016

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Introduction

This report provides background information for Congress on the levels of Department of Defense (DOD) troop and contractor personnel deployed in support of prior and ongoing military operations in Iraq and Afghanistan. For more information on DOD's use of contractor personnel to support military operations, see CRS Report R43074, *Department of Defense's Use of Contractors to Support Military Operations: Background, Analysis, and Issues for Congress*, by (name redacted).

The Role of Contractors in Military Operations

Throughout its history, DOD has relied on contractors to support a wide range of military operations. Operations over the past 30 years have highlighted the critical role that contractors play in supporting U.S. troops—both in terms of the number of contractors and the type of work being performed. During recent U.S. military operations in Iraq and Afghanistan, contractors frequently averaged 50% or more of the total DOD presence in-country.

As of March 2016, there were approximately 28,600 DOD contractor personnel in Afghanistan, compared to 8,730 U.S. troops, with contract personnel representing approximately 77% of the total DOD presence in country.³ Of the 28,600 DOD contractor personnel, approximately 870, or about 3%, were private security contractors.

DOD ceased publicly reporting numbers of DOD contractor personnel working in Iraq in December 2013, following the conclusion of the U.S. combat mission, and the subsequent drawdown of DOD contractor personnel levels in Iraq.

In late 2014, in response in part to developing operations in the region, DOD reinitiated reporting broad estimates of DOD contractor personnel deployed in Iraq in support of Operation Inherent Resolve (OIR). As the number of DOD contractor personnel in Iraq increased over the first six months of 2015, DOD resumed reporting exact numbers and primary mission categories of OIR contractor personnel in June 2015.

As of July 2016, there were approximately 2,500 DOD contractor personnel in Iraq, compared to a current force management level of 4,087 U.S. troops in Iraq, primarily deployed as part of a

Definitions: Defense Contractors and Operational Contract Support

DOD defines a *defense contractor* as “any individual, firm, corporation, partnership, or other legal non-federal entity that enters into a contract directly with the DOD to furnish services, supplies, or construction.”¹

Operational contract support, or the process of planning for and obtaining goods and services from commercial sources, is the main term used in DOD doctrine to describe the use of defense contractors to support military operations.² This report uses *contractor* to describe individual service contractors and subcontractors, hired by prime contractors under DOD-funded contracts. These individuals may provide a wide range of services to the DOD, from transportation, construction, and base support, to intelligence analysis, translation/interpretation, and private security support.

¹See Department of Defense Instruction 3020.41, *Operational Contract Support (OCS)*, December 20, 2011, p.48, at <http://www.dtic.mil/whs/directives/corres/pdf/302041p.pdf>.

²See Joint Publication 4-10, *Operational Contract Support*, July 2014, p. 211, at http://www.dtic.mil/doctrine/new_pubs/jp4_10.pdf.

³See Department of Defense, *Contractor Support of U.S. Operations in the USCENTCOM Area of Responsibility to Include Iraq and Afghanistan*, April 2016, at http://www.acq.osd.mil/log/PS/CENTCOM_reports.html; Boots on the Ground Report, March 2016.

U.S.-led coalition advise-and-assist mission in support of the Government of Iraq.⁴ Contract personnel thus represented approximately 38% of the total estimated DOD presence in-country.

From FY2007 to FY2015, DOD obligations for contracts performed in the greater Iraq and Afghanistan areas of operation were approximately \$220 billion in FY2017 dollars.⁵

A number of analysts have raised questions about the reliability of the data gathered by DOD regarding the contractors it employs in theater in support of military operations. For a discussion on the reliability of the following historical data, see CRS Report R40764, *Department of Defense Contractors in Afghanistan and Iraq: Background and Analysis*, by (name redacted) and (name redacted).

⁴ See Department of Defense, *Contractor Support of U.S. Operations in the USCENTCOM Area of Responsibility to Include Iraq and Afghanistan*, July 2016. As “Boots on the Ground” reports do not currently provide OIR force levels, CRS is using the force management level for Iraq reported biannually by the White House to provide an indication of the current number of U.S. forces estimated to be in Iraq.

⁵ Iraqi areas of operation are defined by CRS as Iraq, Bahrain, Kuwait, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Turkey, the United Arab Emirates, Oman, and Jordan. Afghani areas of operation are defined by CRS as Afghanistan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Pakistan, Turkmenistan, Tajikistan, and Uzbekistan.

U.S. Armed Forces and Contractor Personnel in Afghanistan

Table I. U.S. Armed Forces and Contractor Personnel in Afghanistan
(Q4 FY2007-Q3 FY2016)

	U.S. Armed Forces	Total Contractors	U.S. National Contractors	Foreign and Host Country National Contractors
Q4 FY2007	24,056	29,473	3,387	26,086
Q1 FY2008	24,780	36,520	5,153	31,367
Q2 FY2008	28,650	52,336	4,220	48,116
Q3 FY2008	33,902	41,232	4,724	36,508
Q4 FY2008	33,450	68,252	5,405	62,847
Q1 FY2009	32,500	71,755	5,960	65,795
Q2 FY2009	38,350	68,197	9,378	58,819
Q3 FY2009	55,100	73,968	10,036	62,932
Q4 FY2009	62,300	104,101	9,322	94,779
Q1 FY2010	69,000	107,292	10,016	97,276
Q2 FY2010	79,100	112,092	16,081	96,011
Q3 FY2010	93,800	107,479	19,103	88,376
Q4 FY2010	96,600	70,599	20,874	49,725
Q1 FY2011	96,900	87,483	19,381	68,102
Q2 FY2011	99,800	90,339	20,413	69,926
Q3 FY2011	98,900	93,118	23,294	69,824
Q4 FY2011	98,200	101,789	23,190	78,599
Q1 FY2012	94,100	113,491	25,287	88,204
Q2 FY2012	88,200	117,227	34,765	82,462
Q3 FY2012	85,600	113,736	30,568	83,168
Q4 FY2012	76,500	109,564	31,814	77,750
Q1 FY2013	65,800	110,404	33,444	76,960
Q2 FY2013	65,700	107,796	33,107	74,689
Q3 FY2013	61,300	101,855	32,442	69,413
Q4 FY2013	55,800	85,528	27,188	58,340
Q1 FY2014	43,300	78,136,	23,763	54,373
Q2 FY2014	33,200	61,452	20,865	40,587
Q3 FY2014	31,400	51,489	17,404	34,085
Q4 FY2014	27,800	45,349	17,477	27,872
Q1 FY2015	10,600	39,609	14,222	25,387
Q2 FY2015	9,100	30,820	12,033	18,787
Q3 FY2015	9,060	28,931	10,019	18,912

	U.S. Armed Forces	Total Contractors	U.S. National Contractors	Foreign and Host Country National Contractors
Q4 FY2015	9,100	30,211	10,347	19,864
Q1 FY2016	8,930	30,455	10,151	20,304
Q2 FY2016	8,730	28,626	9,640	18,986
Q3 FY2016	Not Yet Available	26,435	8,837	17,598

Sources: Contractor levels drawn from U.S. Central Command (USCENTCOM) Quarterly Contractor Census Reports; troop levels drawn from “Boots on the Ground” monthly reports to Congress.

Note: DOD did not begin releasing data on contractors in USCENTCOM until Q4 FY2007.

Table 2. U.S. Armed Forces and Private Security Contractor Personnel in Afghanistan
(Q2 FY2008-Q3 FY2016)

	U.S. Armed Forces	Total Private Security Contractors ^a	U.S. National Private Security Contractors	Foreign and Host Country National Private Security Contractors
Q2 FY2008	28,650	6,982	167	6,815
Q3 FY2008	33,902	3,537	5	3,532
Q4 FY2008	33,450	3,847	9	3,838
Q1 FY2009	32,500	3,689	15	3,674
Q2 FY2009	38,350	4,373	17	4,356
Q3 FY2009	55,100	5,198	19	5,179
Q4 FY2009	62,300	11,423	76	11,347
Q1 FY2010	69,000	14,439	114	14,325
Q2 FY2010	79,100	16,733	140	16,593
Q3 FY2010	93,800	17,932	152	17,780
Q4 FY2010	96,600	18,869	197	18,672
Q1 FY2011	96,900	18,919	250	18,669
Q2 FY2011	99,800	18,971	250	18,721
Q3 FY2011	98,900	15,305	693	14,612
Q4 FY2011	98,200	21,544	603	20,941
Q1 FY2012	94,100	20,375	570	19,805
Q2 FY2012	88,200	26,612	519	26,093
Q3 FY2012	85,600	28,686	480	28,206
Q4 FY2012	76,500	18,914	2,014	16,850
Q1 FY2013	65,800	19,414	2,094	17,320
Q2 FY2013	65,700	17,993	1,378	16,615
Q3 FY2013	61,300	16,218	873	15,345
Q4 FY2013	55,800	14,056	844	13,212

	U.S. Armed Forces	Total Private Security Contractors ^a	U.S. National Private Security Contractors	Foreign and Host Country National Private Security Contractors
Q1 FY2014	43,300	11,332	1,007	10,325
Q2 FY2014	33,200	5,591	641	4,950
Q3 FY2014	31,400	3,177	424	2,753
Q4 FY2014	27,800	2,472	252	2,220
Q1 FY2015	10,600	1,511	317	1,194
Q2 FY2015	9,100	1,525	398	1,127
Q3 FY2015	9,060	1,779	421	1,358
Q4 FY2015	9,100	1,655	312	1,343
Q1 FY2016	8,930	1,083	176	907
Q2 FY2016	8,730	872	125	747
Q3 FY2016	Not Yet Available	1,022	174	848

Sources: Contractor levels drawn from USCENTCOM Quarterly Contractor Census Reports; force levels drawn from “Boots on the Ground” monthly reports to Congress.

Notes: DOD did not begin releasing data on private security contractor personnel levels within Afghanistan until Q2 FY2008.

- a. Includes most subcontractors and service contractors, armed and unarmed, hired by prime contractors under DOD contracts.

U.S. Armed Forces and Contractor Personnel in Iraq

Table 3. U.S. Armed Forces and Contractor Personnel in Iraq
(Q4 F72007-Q1 FY2014; Q1 FY2015-Q3 FY2016)

	U.S. Armed Forces	Total Contractors	U.S. National Contractors	Foreign and Host Country National Contractors
Q4 FY2007	165,607	154,825	26,869	127,956
Q1 FY2008	161,783	163,591	31,325	132,266
Q2 FY2008	159,700	149,378	29,351	120,027
Q3 FY2008	153,300	162,428	29,611	132,817
Q4 FY2008	146,900	163,446	28,045	135,401
Q1 FY2009	148,500	148,050	39,262	108,788
Q2 FY2009	141,300	132,610	36,061	96,549
Q3 FY2009	134,500	119,706	31,541	88,165
Q4 FY2009	129,200	113,731	29,944	83,787
Q1 FY2010	114,300	100,035	27,843	72,192
Q2 FY2010	95,900	95,461	24,719	70,742
Q3 FY2010	88,320	79,621	22,761	56,860
Q4 FY2010	48,410	74,106	20,981	53,125

	U.S. Armed Forces	Total Contractors	U.S. National Contractors	Foreign and Host Country National Contractors
Q1 FY2011	47,305	71,142	19,943	51,199
Q2 FY2011	45,660	64,253	18,393	45,860
Q3 FY2011	46,010	62,689	18,900	43,789
Q4 FY2011	44,755	52,637	16,054	36,583
Q1 FY2012	11,445	23,886 ^a	11,237	12,649
Q2 FY2012	—	10,967 ^a	3,260	7,707
Q3 FY2012	—	7,336 ^a	2,493	4,843
Q4 FY2012	—	9,000 ^a	2,314	6,686
Q1 FY2013	—	8,449 ^a	2,356	6,093
Q2 FY2013	—	7,905 ^a	2,125	5,780
Q3 FY2013	—	7,735 ^a	1,898	5,837
Q4 FY2013	—	6,624 ^a	1,626	4,998
Q1 FY2014	—	3,234 ^a	820	2,414
No Data on Contractors Released by USCENTCOM from Q2 FY2014-Q4 FY2014				
Q1 FY2015	Up to 3,100 ^b	250 (est.)	No Data Available	No Data Available
Q2 FY2015	Up to 3,100 ^b	600 (est.)	No Data Available	No Data Available
Q3 FY2015	Up to 3,550 ^c	1,349	1,140	209
Q4 FY2015	Up to 3,550 ^c	1,403	1,098	305
Q1 FY2016	Up to 3,550 ^d	2,028	1,392	636
Q2 FY2016	Up to 3,550 ^d	2,619	1,564	1,055
Q3 FY2016	Up to 4,087 ^e	2,485	1,605	880

Sources: Force levels from Q4 FY2007 to Q1FY2012 are drawn from the DOD’s “Boots on the Ground” monthly reports to Congress. Force levels for Q1FY2015-Q2FY2016 are drawn from the White House’s semiannual “War Powers Resolution Report” to Congress. All listed contractor levels are drawn from USCENTCOM Quarterly Contractor Census Reports.

Notes: DOD did not begin releasing data on contractors in USCENTCOM until the second half of 2007, and initially ceased reporting data on DOD contractor personnel in Iraq in December 2013. Following the conclusion of the U.S. combat mission in Iraq, the “Boots on the Ground” monthly reports ceased providing separate force levels for Iraq. However, a residual U.S. force remained in country to provide embassy security and security cooperation assistance. Beginning in June 2014, in response to the military operations of the Islamic State (also known as ISIS/ISIL), additional U.S. military personnel were deployed to Iraq through OIR to advise and train Iraqi forces, serve as observers, and secure U.S. personnel and facilities. For further discussion of the U.S. and its coalition partners’ efforts to combat the Islamic State, see CRS Report R43612, *The Islamic State and U.S. Policy*, by (name redacted) and (name redacted), and CRS Report R44135, *Coalition Contributions to Countering the Islamic State*, by (name redacted). In Q1FY2015, USCENTCOM resumed releasing data on DOD contractor personnel in Iraq—as the “Boots on the Ground” reports do not currently provide OIR force levels, CRS is using the Force Management Levels for Iraq reported biannually by the White House, beginning with the December 2014 “Six Month Consolidated War Powers Resolution Report,” to provide an indication of the current number of U.S. forces estimated to be in Iraq.

- a. USCENTCOM reported that DOD contractors in Iraq from Q1FY2012 through Q1FY2014 were supporting both U.S. Mission Iraq and the Office of Security Cooperation Iraq.

- b. Force Management Level for Iraq, as reported by The White House, Office of the Press Secretary, “Letter from the President—Six Month Consolidated War Powers Resolution Report,” December 11, 2014, at <https://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2014/12/11/letter-president-six-month-consolidated-war-powers-resolution-report>.
- c. Force Management Level for Iraq, as reported by The White House, Office of the Press Secretary, “Letter from the President—Six Month Consolidated War Powers Resolution Report,” June 11, 2015, at <https://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2015/06/11/letter-president-six-month-consolidated-war-powers-resolution-report>.
- d. Force Management Level for Iraq, as reported by The White House, Office of the Press Secretary, “Letter from the President—War Powers Resolution,” December 11, 2015, at <https://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2015/12/11/letter-president-war-powers-resolution>.
- e. Force Management Level for Iraq, as reported by The White House, Office of the Press Secretary, “Letter from the President—War Powers Resolution,” June 13, 2016, at <https://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2016/06/13/letter-president-war-powers-resolution>.

Table 4. U.S. Armed Forces and Private Security Contractors in Iraq
(Q1 FY2008-Q4 FY2013)

	U.S. Armed Forces	Total Private Security Contractors^a	U.S. National Private Security Contractors	Foreign and Host Country National Private Security Contractors
Q1 FY2008	161,783	9,952	830	9,122
Q2 FY2008	159,700	7,259	515	6,744
Q3 FY2008	153,300	7,704	1,540	6,164
Q4 FY2008	146,900	10,446	886 ^b	9,560
Q1 FY2009	148,500	9,218	727 ^b	8,436
Q2 FY2009	141,300	12,942	681	12,261
Q3 FY2009	134,500	15,279	802	14,477
Q4 FY2009	129,200	12,684	670	12,014
Q1 FY2010	114,300	11,095	776	10,319
Q2 FY2010	95,900	11,610	1,081	10,529
Q3 FY2010	88,320	11,413	1,030	10,383
Q4 FY2010	48,410	11,628	1,017	10,611
Q1 FY2011	47,305	8,327	791	7,536
Q2 FY2011	45,660	9,207	917	8,290
Q3 FY2011	46,010	10,414	935	9,479
Q4 FY2011	44,755	9,554	844	8,710
Q1 FY2012	11,445	8,995	751	8,244
Q2 FY2012	—	3,577	288	3,289
Q3 FY2012	—	2,407	116	2,291
Q4 FY2012	—	2,116	102	2,014
Q1 FY2013	—	2,281	235	2,046
Q2 FY2013	—	2,359	259	2,100
Q3 FY2013	—	2,148	217	1,931

	U.S. Armed Forces	Total Private Security Contractors^a	U.S. National Private Security Contractors	Foreign and Host Country National Private Security Contractors
Q4 FY2013	—	2,409	147	2,262

Sources: Force levels from Q1 FY2008 to Q1 FY2012 are drawn from the DOD's "Boots on the Ground" monthly reports to Congress. Contractor levels are drawn from USCENTCOM Quarterly Contractor Census Reports.

Notes: DOD did not begin releasing data on private security contractor personnel levels in USCENTCOM until Q1 FY2008, and ceased reporting data on DOD-funded private security contractor personnel in Iraq in Q4 FY2013. As of Q3 FY2016, USCENTCOM has not resumed reporting data on DOD-funded private security personnel in Iraq. See **Table 3** for further discussion of recent U.S. troop and contractor levels in Iraq.

- a. USCENTCOM reported that DOD contractors in Iraq from December 2011 through December 2013 were supporting both U.S. Mission Iraq and the Office of Security Cooperation Iraq.
- b. USCENTCOM Quarterly Census Reports from Q4 FY2008 and Q1 FY2009 also included NATO coalition personnel in the reported totals of U.S. private security contractor personnel.

Table 5. DOD Contract Obligations in Iraq and Afghanistan Theaters of Operation

(FY2007-FY2015; in millions of FY2017 dollars)

		FY2007	FY2008	FY2009	FY2010	FY2011	FY2012	FY2013	FY2014	FY2015	Total
Iraq Theater	Iraq	\$14,685.56	\$17,987.49	\$10,580.81	\$7,878.74	\$5,222.69	\$617.71	\$537.31	\$77.62	\$249.39	\$57,587.93
	Bahrain	\$588.93	\$1,333.27	\$2,190.98	\$609.37	\$526.26	\$338.40	\$883.97	\$212.81	\$551.41	\$6,683.98
	Kuwait	\$4,983.13	\$4,934.01	\$5,821.30	\$5,050.40	\$3,983.48	\$2,612.30	\$3,139.88	\$1,793.63	\$2,004.14	\$32,318.13
	Qatar	\$323.46	\$469.24	\$886.45	\$351.45	\$840.67	\$870.86	\$432.20	\$175.28	\$324.56	\$4,349.61
	Saudi Arabia	\$210.60	\$375.76	\$989.33	\$806.44	\$309.49	\$570.03	\$964.00	\$1,255.52	\$2,093.57	\$5,481.17
	Turkey	\$375.63	\$192.94	\$311.55	\$142.84	\$185.75	\$286.12	\$191.61	\$184.99	\$203.56	\$1,871.42
	UAE	\$261.33	\$1,326.57	\$305.78	\$2,662.15	\$1,060.54	\$1,467.74	\$2,281.36	\$1,757.48	\$1,306.55	\$11,122.94
	Oman	\$94.29	\$107.54	\$85.31	\$125.88	\$142.16	\$214.68	\$228.80	\$106.60	\$124.73	\$1,105.28
	Jordan	\$83.85	\$92.30	\$14.81	\$13.77	\$40.01	\$54.17	\$177.08	\$168.23	\$203.89	\$644.21
<i>Total Iraq Theater</i>		\$21,606.77	\$26,819.14	\$21,186.33	\$17,641.03	\$12,311.04	\$7,032.01	\$8,836.20	\$5,732.15	\$6,842.88	\$121,164.67
Afghanistan Theater	Afghanistan	\$3,800.69	\$6,893.02	\$8,200.70	\$13,079.75	\$18,149.95	\$19,426.34	\$15,003.74	\$6,176.47	\$3,274.96	\$90,730.66
	Kazakhstan	\$6.06	\$30.07	\$48.07	\$66.29	\$75.27	\$78.52	\$93.56	\$57.51	\$67.42	\$455.34
	Kyrgyzstan	\$426.99	\$20.29	\$374.47	\$134.14	\$906.81	\$1,988.82	\$2,022.96	\$684.07	-\$1.85	\$6,558.54
	Pakistan	\$74.48	\$234.86	\$253.93	\$179.50	\$65.08	\$17.30	-\$3.65	\$23.91	\$74.88	\$845.42
	Tajikistan	\$0.00	\$0.01	\$1.09	\$3.80	\$3.55	\$8.87	\$9.25	\$7.49	\$6.99	\$34.06
	Turkmenistan	\$0.45	\$19.30	\$9.24	\$24.21	\$10.45	\$4.44	\$13.97	\$1.48	\$0.15	\$83.54
	Uzbekistan	\$13.94	\$16.06	\$9.90	\$22.73	\$16.44	\$23.82	\$19.09	\$22.16	\$32.22	\$144.16
<i>Total Afghanistan Theater</i>		\$4,322.61	\$7,213.62	\$8,897.40	\$13,510.41	\$19,227.54	\$21,548.12	\$17,158.92	\$6,973.08	\$3,347.67	\$98,851.71
Total Iraq and Afghanistan		\$25,929.39	\$34,032.76	\$30,083.73	\$31,151.45	\$31,538.59	\$28,580.13	\$25,995.11	\$12,705.23	\$10,190.55	\$220,016.38

Sources: Federal Procurement Data System, as of June 30, 2016 for FY2007-FY2015 data; CRS adjustments for inflation using deflators for converting into FY2017 dollars derived from Office of the Under Secretary of Defense (Comptroller), Department of Defense, *National Defense Budget Estimates for FY2017*, "Department of Defense Deflators – TOA By Category 'Total Non-Pay,'" Table 5-5, p. 58-59, March 2016.

Notes: Numbers may not add due to rounding.

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