



One Hundred Sixteenth Congress
Committee on Homeland Security
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

October 18, 2019

The Honorable Kevin K. McAleenan
Acting Secretary
Department of Homeland Security
Washington, DC 20528

The Honorable David J. Glawe
Under Secretary
Office of Intelligence and Analysis
Department of Homeland Security
Washington, DC 20528

Dear Acting Secretary McAleenan and Under Secretary Glawe:

We write to request the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) Office of Intelligence and Analysis produce an intelligence assessment regarding the threat to the homeland posed by Islamic State (ISIS) foreign fighters and others released or escaped in the aftermath of the withdrawal of U.S. troops and Turkey's military actions in northeastern Syria.

Since last week, ISIS has moved to capitalize on instability in the Kurdish-controlled region in northeastern Syria.¹ The terrorist group has bolstered its propaganda campaign by taunting the Kurdish-backed Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF), celebrating the release of hundreds of ISIS prisoners, and claiming responsibility for several recent assaults on SDF forces.²

Currently, there are between 10,000 and 12,000 ISIS fighters and family members detained in SDF-run camps, of which over a thousand are believed to be from European countries.³ In recent days, Kurdish officials have confirmed that at least 800 of those detained have been released or escaped after SDF resources were reallocated to stave off the incursion of Turkish forces to the

¹ *ISIS eyes breakout opportunity as Turkish forces batter Kurds*, WASHINGTON POST, October 17, 2019, https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/national-security/isis-eyes-breakout-opportunity-as-turkish-forces-batter-us-allied-kurds/2019/10/17/b68c6358-f048-11e9-89eb-ec56cd414732_story.html.

² *ISIS eyes breakout opportunity as Turkish forces batter Kurds*, WASHINGTON POST, October 17, 2019, https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/national-security/isis-eyes-breakout-opportunity-as-turkish-forces-batter-us-allied-kurds/2019/10/17/b68c6358-f048-11e9-89eb-ec56cd414732_story.html.


³ *Hundreds of ISIS prisoners are escaping from camps in northern Syria amid Turkish offensive*, CNBC, October 14, 2019, <https://www.cnbc.com/2019/10/14/isis-prisoners-are-escaping-from-camps-in-syria-amid-turkish-offensive.html>. *ISIS eyes breakout opportunity as Turkish forces batter Kurds*, WASHINGTON POST, October 17, 2019, https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/national-security/isis-eyes-breakout-opportunity-as-turkish-forces-batter-us-allied-kurds/2019/10/17/b68c6358-f048-11e9-89eb-ec56cd414732_story.html.

north.⁴ Of particular concern are media reports suggesting U.S. forces have been “unable to relocate 50 [High Value Individuals], the most dangerous of the terrorists.”

Given the ability of foreign fighters and others escaped or released to transit through Turkey, we are concerned about the threat they may pose to the U.S. Accordingly, we request DHS issue an intelligence assessment analyzing the recent events in Syria and their possible security impact on the homeland.

Thank you for your attention to this important matter.

Sincerely,



BENNIE G. THOMPSON
Chairman



MIKE ROGERS
Ranking Member

⁴ *ISIS eyes breakout opportunity as Turkish forces batter Kurds*, WASHINGTON POST, October 17, 2019, https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/national-security/isis-eyes-breakout-opportunity-as-turkish-forces-batter-us-allied-kurds/2019/10/17/b68c6358-f048-11e9-89eb-cc56cd414732_story.html.