

Congress of the United States

House of Representatives

COMMITTEE ON OVERSIGHT AND GOVERNMENT REFORM

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WASHINGTON, DC 20515-6143

MAJORITY (202) 225-5074

MINORITY (202) 225-5051

<http://oversight.house.gov>

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,

¹ *Pentagon Strips Iraq, Afghanistan, Syria Troop Numbers from the Web*, Military Times (Apr. 9, 2018) (online at www.militarytimes.com/news/your-military/2018/04/09/dod-strips-iraq-afghanistan-syria-troop-numbers-from-web).

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.² 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."³ 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.

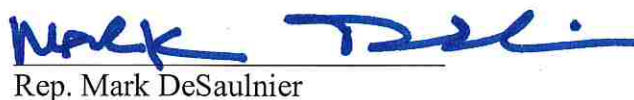
Sincerely,



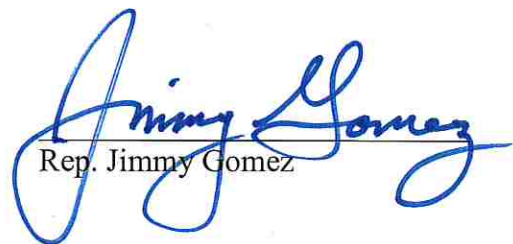
Rep. Stephen F. Lynch
Ranking Member



Rep. Peter Welch



Rep. Mark DeSaulnier



Rep. Jimmy Gomez



Rep. Eljahn E. Cummings
Ex Officio

² *26,000 US Troops Total in Iraq, Afghanistan and Syria, DoD Reports*, Defense News (Nov. 27, 2017) (online at www.defensenews.com/news/your-military/2017/11/27/26000-us-troops-total-in-iraq-afghanistan-and-syria-dod-reports).

³ *Jim Mattis Promises More Accurate Accounting of US Troop Deployments*, Washington Examiner (Aug. 29, 2017) (online at www.washingtonexaminer.com/jim-mattis-promises-more-accurate-accounting-of-us-troop-deployments).

The Honorable James Mattis

Page 3

cc: The Honorable Trey Gowdy, Chairman

The Honorable Ron DeSantis, Chairman
Subcommittee on National Security



THE SECRETARY OF DEFENSE
1000 DEFENSE PENTAGON
WASHINGTON, DC 20301-1000

5/24/2018

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:

Required by	Country	Type	Frequency	Provided To	Provided By
War Powers Act	Various	* Military Personnel	Semiannual	Speaker, President Pro Temore, HFAC, SFRC, HASC, SASC, HAC-D, SAC-D	POTUS
FY10 DoD Approps	Afghanistan	* Military Personnel	Monthly	HASC, SASC, HAC-D, SAC-D	Joint Staff
FY16 NDAA	Iraq, Syria	* Military Personnel	Quarterly	HASC, SASC, HAC-D, SAC-D	Joint Staff
FY18 NDAA	Iraq, Syria, Afghanistan	* Military Personnel, Civilians, Contractors	Quarterly	HASC, SASC, HAC-D, SAC-D	OSD/Joint Staff
N/A	Iraq, Syria	* Operations Update	4-6 Wks	HASC, SASC, HAC-D, SAC-D Professional Staff	OSD Joint Staff
N/A	Iraq, Syria, Afghanistan	** Military Personnel	Weekly	Public	Public Affairs

* 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.

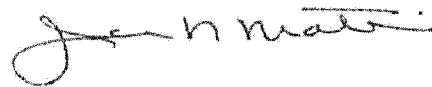


OSD070731-18/CMD071081-18

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,



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 SECRETARY OF DEFENSE
1000 DEFENSE PENTAGON
WASHINGTON, DC 20301-1000

5/24/2018

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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FY10 DoD Approps	Afghanistan	* Military Personnel	Monthly	HASC, SASC, HAC-D, SAC-D	Joint Staff
FY16 NDAA	Iraq, Syria	* Military Personnel	Quarterly	HASC, SASC, HAC-D, SAC-D	Joint Staff
FY18 NDAA	Iraq, Syria, Afghanistan	* Military Personnel, Civilians, Contractors	Quarterly	HASC, SASC, HAC-D, SAC-D	OSD/ Joint Staff
N/A	Iraq, Syria	* Operations Update	4-6 Wks	HASC, SASC, HAC-D, SAC-D Professional Staff	OSD/ Joint Staff
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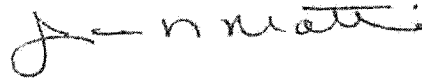


OSD070731-18/CMD071081-18

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SINCERELY,



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

OSD Number:	071563-17	Subject: (S//REL) Revised OIR Force Management Construct	
Type:	ACTION		
Component:	USP		
Suspense:	N/A		
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ExecSec MA & ExecSec Date: 9/20 - (S//REL) Policy seeks SD approval of the plan for OIR (TAB B) to implement the new force management construct (b) (1) (A), (b) (1) (D)	<input type="checkbox"/> Box <input type="checkbox"/> Byers <input type="checkbox"/> DCoS <input type="checkbox"/> Donnelly Date: ___/___/___ <input type="checkbox"/> Machine <input type="checkbox"/> Mikolay <input type="checkbox"/> Reid <input type="checkbox"/> Walsh		
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> MA SIR, APPROVAL OF THIS MEMO DIRECTS FM ACCOUNTING TO (b) (1) (A), (b) (1) (D)	Date: 27/500/17		
- (S//NF) The proposed implementation plan (b) (1) (A), (b) (1) (D)	FOR OIR. Rec Approval. PHIL		
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> SMA	Date: 9/27/17		
- (S//NF) Under the new construct, total force numbers to be publically disclosed: 1. Iraq - 5200 2. Syria - 2000 3. Afghanistan - 11,000 @	<input type="checkbox"/> SOM _____ <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> CoS FOR SOMA.	Date: 9/27/17	
<input type="checkbox"/> SOM _____	Date: ___/___/___		
<input type="checkbox"/> Confidential Assistant	Date: ___/___/___		
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> DepSecDef (M)	Date: 9/26/17		
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> SecDef ADD TO CJCS DISCUSSION, FRIDAY, 29 SEP 17 * Approved 10/6 -> SEE NOTES SEY @ PDR SMA	Date: 9/28/17		
ExecSec Final Distribution			
<input type="checkbox"/> SOM _____ Date: ___/___/___	<input type="checkbox"/> Hold for Rollout / Hill Notification	<input type="checkbox"/> PDF to:	
	<input type="checkbox"/> Distro / File		
	<input type="checkbox"/> Other		

SMA CAC 9/28

~~SECRET//REL TO USA, FVEY~~

ACTION MEMO

Prepared by: (b) (6) DenSec Action SA/ME (b) (6)

FOR: SECRETARY OF DEFENSE *gmm 9/28*

286 SEP 19 2017

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 (b) (1) (A), (b) (1) (D) (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 OIR force management implementation plan.

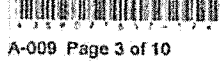
DISCUSSION: (~~S//REL~~) (b) (1) (A), (b) (1) (D) (b) (1) (A), (b) (1) (D)

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

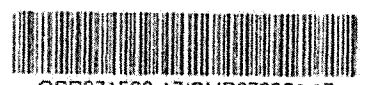
(b) (1) (A), (b) (1) (D)

SD/CA	
SD/SMA	
SD/MA	
CS	
SD Action Cpt	
ES	
USR	
DSD/VA	
DSD/MA	
DSD/CA	
DSD/IA	
ESB/RA	
ESD	

Derived from: Multiple Sources
Declassify on: August 28, 2042



~~SECRET//REL TO USA, FVEY~~



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



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

Approve: ✓ 10/7 Disapprove: _____ Other: DISCUSS w/ CHAIRMAN
FRIDAY.

Attachments: approve

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~~ C

~~TAB D: Memo to DoD on EML Authority for OIR April 26, 2017~~

~~TAB E: Coordination~~

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



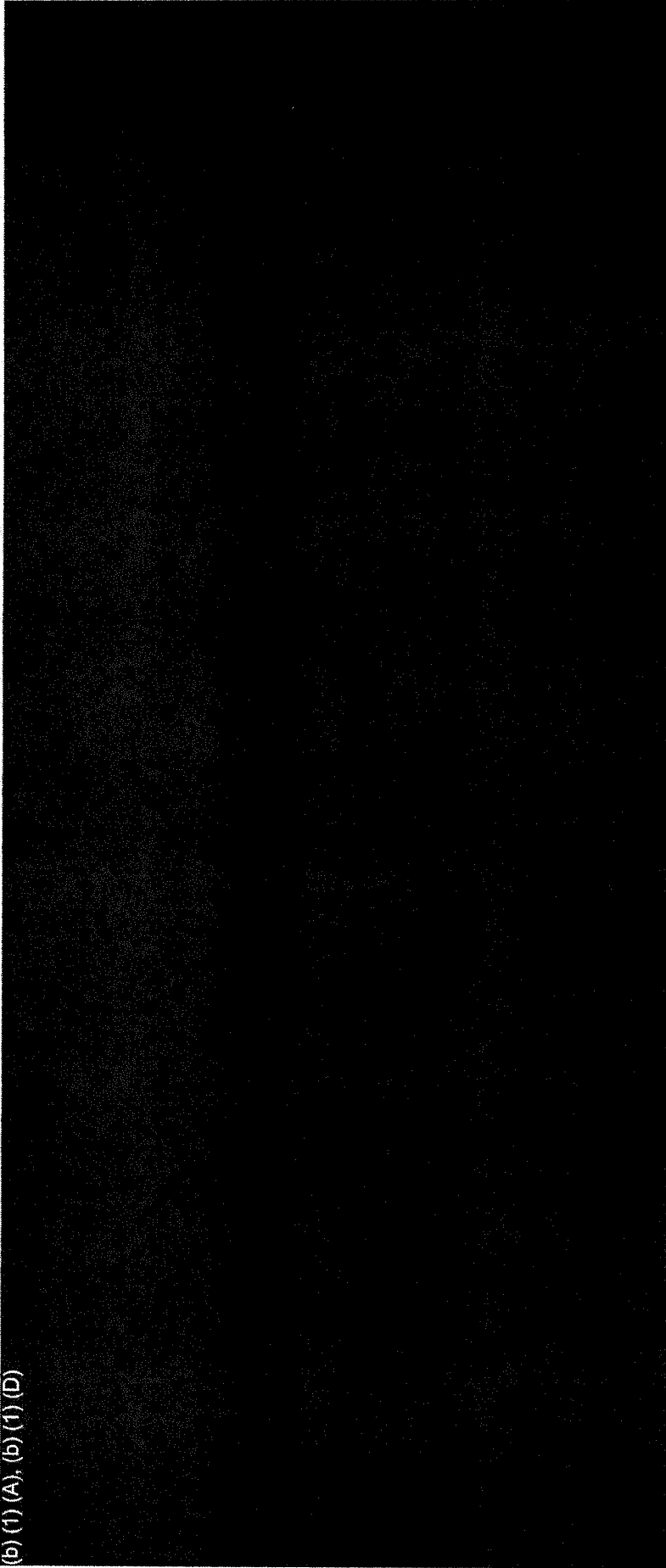
10/7 - No rush...
- Socialize...
(b) (6)

~~SECRET~~

~~(S)~~ Summary of Changes to Force Reporting

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

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



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

(b) (6) DSD Policy ISA/ME
Phone Number: (b) (6)

~~SECRET~~

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

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



Prepared by: OSD Policy ISA/ME Iraq Team (b) (6)

Derived from: Multiple Sources

Declassify on: July 6, 2042

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



Policy Coordination Sheet

Subject: Revised OIR Force Management Construct

Control Number: *USP071657-17*

Title/Organization	Name	Coordination Requested	Coordination Received
PDASD ISA	Katie Wheelbarger	8/18/2017	8/18/2017
PDO/GC OGC	Paul Koffsky	8/17/2017	8/18/2017
ASD OSD/PA	Dana White	8/17/2017	8/18/2017
PDASD OSD/LA	Pete Giambastiani	8/17/2017	8/18/2017
VDJS/Joint Staff	RADM Mike Dumont	8/17/2017	8/18/2017

ACTION MEMO

DepSec Action *HAS Secu / ESK*
Prepared by: (b) (6) ISA/ME, (b) (6)
(b) (6) APSA/APC, (b) (6)

FOR: SECRETARY OF DEFENSE *jam 8/29*

FROM: Robert Story Karem, Performing the Duties of the Under Secretary of Defense *HAS Secu / ESK* (Policy) 9 2017

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

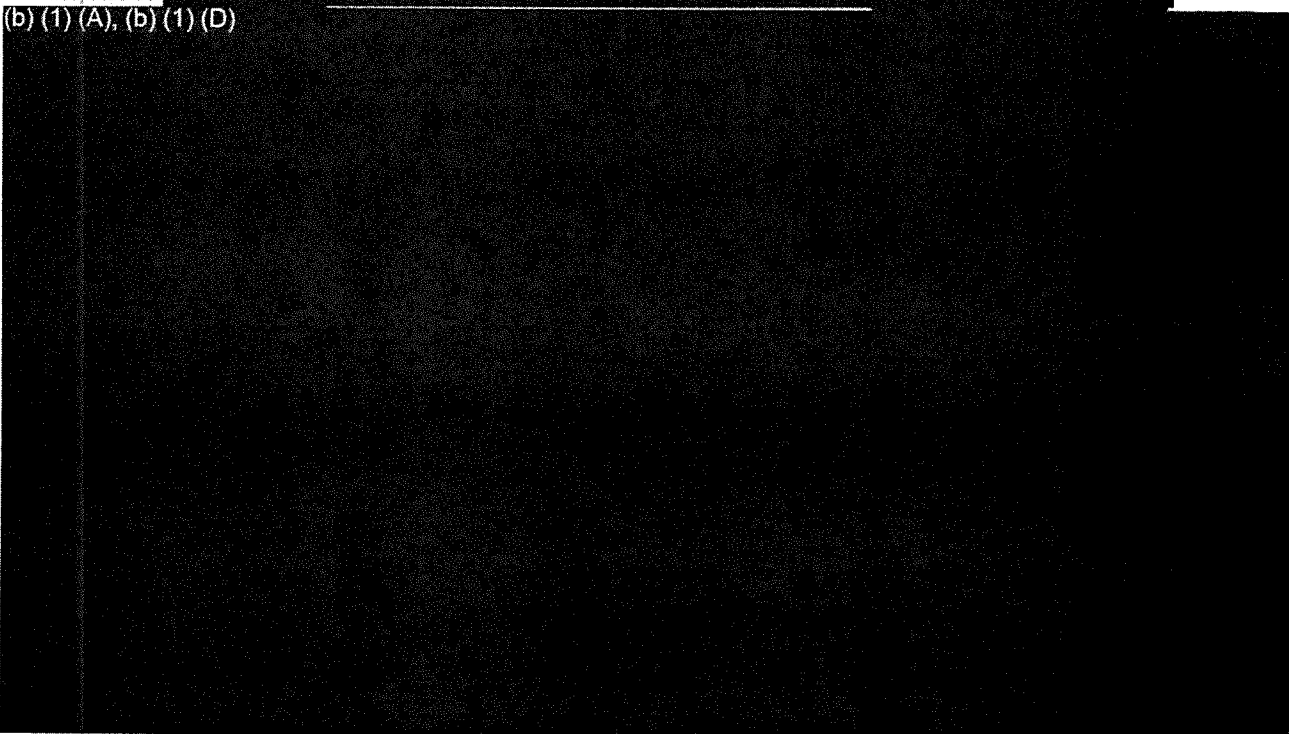
PURPOSE: (~~S//REL~~) This memo seeks your approval of the plan for Operation FREEDOM SENTINEL (TAB B) to implement the new force management construct (b) (1) (A), (b) (1) (D) (b) (1) (A), (b) (1) (D)

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)

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



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

Approve: *jam 8/30* Disapprove: _____ Other: _____

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



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)

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

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

(b) (6), OSD Policy ISA/ME
Phone Number: (b) (6)

~~SECRET~~

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

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

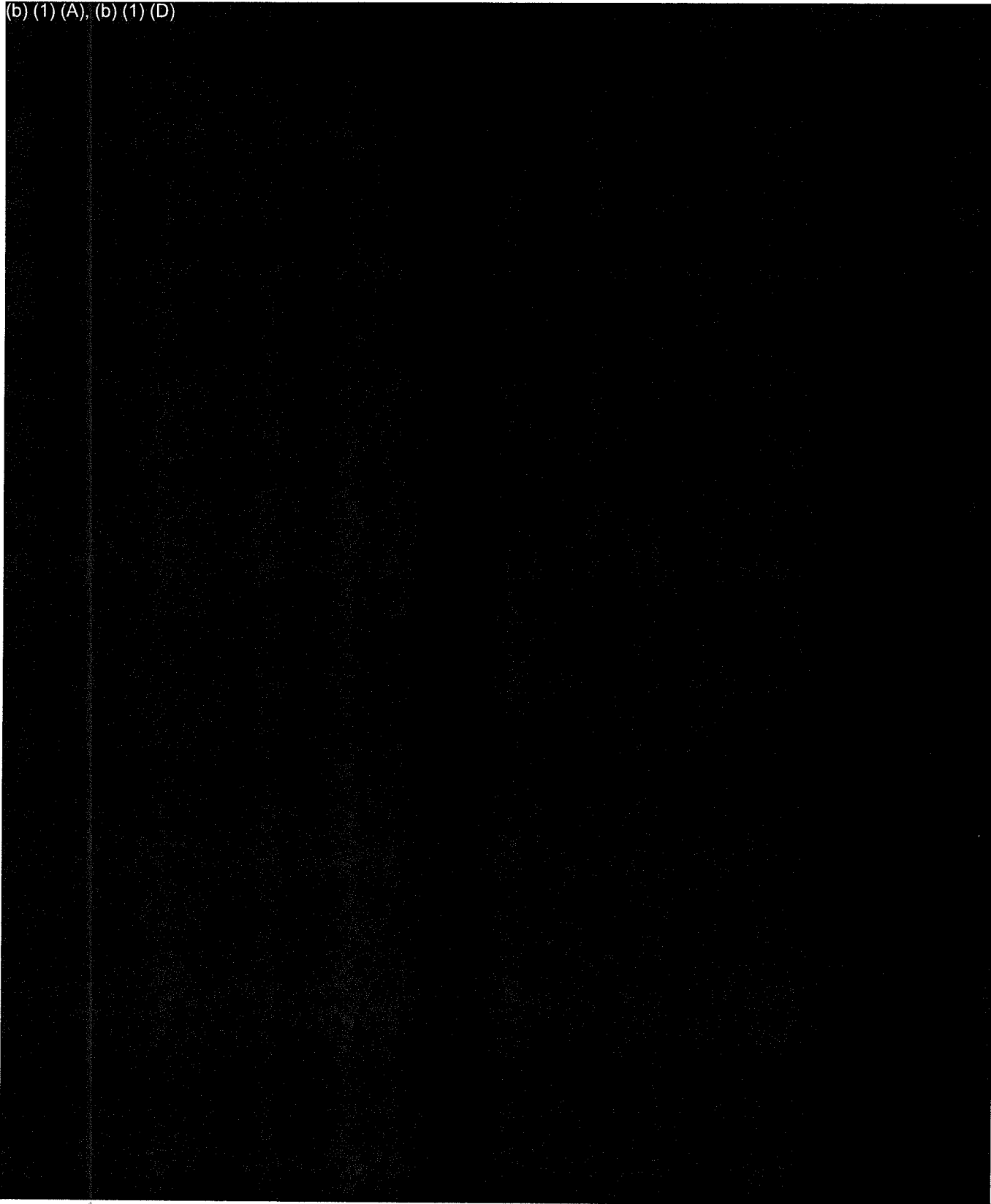


Prepared by: OSD Policy APSA/APC Afghanistan Team. (b) (6)

Derived from: Multiple Sources

Declassify on: July 6, 2042

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



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

