

CONCERNED VETERANS FOR AMERICA WITHDRAWING FROM SYRIA



OUR VIEW

After the defeat of ISIS' territorial caliphate, the U.S.' principal objective in Syria has been achieved. Remaining in Syria is not critical to keep America safe nor in our national interest. With no clearly achievable mission remaining, it's time to withdraw our troops from Syria and re-focus on higher strategic priorities, such as great power deterrence.

MYTH vs. FACT

***Myth:** A U.S. ground presence in Syria is necessary to eliminate terrorist groups and deter future attacks.*

***Fact:** The U.S.' unparalleled over-the-horizon strike capabilities have a proven track record of eliminating threats to Americans when necessary from neighboring countries. The raid that killed Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi did not originate from Syria, demonstrating that an open-ended ground presence is not necessary to address such threats.*

***Myth:** The U.S. needs to remain in Syria to prevent an ISIS resurgence.*

***Fact:** With the defeat of its territorial caliphate, ISIS' fighters are scattered and its capabilities are severely degraded. Regional actors have an interest in and collective capability to contain and defeat what remains of ISIS. Remaining in Syria exposes our troops to the dangers of a multifaceted civil war with bad and worse outcomes.*

***Myth:** Russian and Iranian influence in Syria will seriously harm U.S. interests.*

***Fact:** America's presence in Syria does Russia and Iran a favor by subsidizing their security and enabling them or their proxies to more easily target our troops. Because of geographic and historical realities, Russia and Iran have had deep influence in Syria for generations and will in years to come regardless of U.S. actions. Russian or Iranian influence in a country with little strategic relevance for the U.S. does not implicate our vital national interests—the risk of accidental conflict leading to escalation with a great power does.*

***Myth:** The U.S. needs to protect our Kurdish allies in Syria.*

***Fact:** The U.S. partnership with Kurdish forces such as the YPG was meant to be limited to cooperating to defeat ISIS. While the U.S. should have better communicated the nature of this partnership to the Kurds, it is not America's responsibility to advance the prospect of Kurdish autonomy or statehood—doing so will only alienate our NATO ally Turkey and drive it towards Russia. The best way for the Kurds to avoid conflict with Turkey is to come to terms with the Assad regime, whose continued presence the U.S. must be realistic about anticipating.*

***Myth:** The U.S. should remain in Syria to prevent its oil wealth from falling into the wrong hands.*

***Fact:** This mission is an unauthorized use of U.S. military force and strategically ill-advised. Syrian oil wealth was modest, barely reaching 400,000 barrels per day (less than any of the top 30 global producers) even before the civil war. More importantly, retaining control over Syrian oil fields will lead to a needless confrontation with the Assad regime and its powerful partners like Russia at a time when we should be shifting our strategic focus away from the middle east and minimizing the opportunity for our troops to be targets in the region.*

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