



Report to the Chairman, Subcommittee
on Regulatory Affairs and Federal
Management, Committee on Homeland
Security and Governmental Affairs, U.S.
Senate

September 2018

OVERSEAS CONFLICTS

U.S. Agencies Have
Coordinated
Stabilization Efforts
but Need to
Document Their
Agreement

GAO Highlights

Highlights of [GAO-18-654](#), a report to the Chairman, Subcommittee on Regulatory Affairs and Federal Management, Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs, U.S. Senate

Why GAO Did This Study

The United States has a national security interest in promoting stability in conflict-affected countries to prevent or mitigate the consequences of armed conflict, according to the 2017 National Security Strategy. State, USAID, and DOD have reported that a collaborative government approach is an essential part of maximizing the effectiveness of U.S. efforts in conflict-affected areas.

GAO was asked to review U.S. conflict prevention, mitigation, and stabilization efforts abroad. This report (1) describes examples of conflict prevention, mitigation, and stabilization efforts that U.S. agencies and USIP conducted in Iraq, Nigeria, and Syria and their goals in fiscal year 2017 and (2) examines the extent to which U.S. agencies and USIP incorporated key collaboration practices to coordinate their efforts. GAO collected data from the agencies and USIP on their efforts and goals in Iraq, Nigeria, and Syria. GAO selected these countries based on U.S. national security interests, among other criteria. GAO reviewed agency and USIP documents, interviewed officials, and conducted fieldwork in Iraq, Nigeria, and Jordan. GAO assessed coordination against key practices identified by GAO to enhance interagency collaboration.

What GAO Recommends

State, USAID, and DOD should document agreement on their coordination for U.S. stabilization efforts through formal written guidance and agreements addressing key collaboration practices. The agencies concurred with the recommendations.

View [GAO-18-654](#). For more information, contact Jessica Farb at (202) 512-7114 or FarbJ@gao.gov.

September 2018

OVERSEAS CONFLICTS

U.S. Agencies Have Coordinated Stabilization Efforts but Need to Document Their Agreement

What GAO Found

The Departments of State (State) and Defense (DOD), the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID), and the U.S. Institute of Peace (USIP)—an independent, federally funded institute—reported conducting various efforts to address conflict prevention, mitigation, and stabilization for Iraq, Nigeria, and Syria in fiscal year 2017. For example, in Iraq, State supported efforts to remove improvised explosive devices from homes and infrastructure (see figure); USAID contributed to the United Nations to restore essential services; DOD provided immediate medical trauma supplies to the World Health Organization to treat injured civilians; and USIP conducted facilitated dialogues to enable local reconciliation in areas liberated from the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant.

Example of U.S. Department of State Stabilization Effort in Iraq



Source: Department of State (photo courtesy of Janus Global Operations). | GAO-18-654

In conducting U.S. conflict prevention, mitigation, and stabilization efforts, State, USAID, DOD, and USIP have addressed aspects of key collaboration practices such as elements of bridging organizational cultures and leadership. However, the agencies have not formally documented their agreement on coordination for U.S. stabilization efforts through formal written guidance and agreements that address key collaboration practices. GAO found the following, for example, with regard to the extent key collaboration practices have been used by these entities.

Bridging organizational cultures: U.S. agencies have established various mechanisms to coordinate their efforts, such as interagency working groups and staff positions focused on coordination. USIP convenes interagency actors, including State, USAID, and DOD through various programs and events.

Defining outcomes and accountability: One or more agencies have established some common outcomes and accountability mechanisms for their stabilization efforts in Iraq, Nigeria, and Syria. Moreover, through an interagency review of U.S. stabilization assistance, State, USAID, and DOD identified a need to develop an outcome-based political strategy outlining end states for U.S. stabilization efforts and strategic analytics to track and measure progress, among other needs.

Written guidance and agreements: Although State, USAID, and DOD have developed a framework for stabilization, they have not documented their agreement on the key collaboration practices identified, such as defining outcomes and accountability and clarifying roles and responsibilities. According to key practices for enhancing interagency collaboration, articulating agreements in formal documents can strengthen collaborative efforts, and reduce the potential for duplication, overlap, and fragmentation.

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Abbreviations

Coalition	Global Coalition to Defeat ISIS
CVE	countering violent extremism
DOD	Department of Defense
DRL	Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor
ERW	explosive remnants of war
IDP	internally displaced persons
ISIL	Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant
ISIS	Islamic State of Iraq and Syria
NSC	National Security Council
OHDACA	Overseas Humanitarian, Disaster, and Civic Aid
SSAP	Southern Syria Assistance Platform
SAR	Stabilization Assistance Review
State	Department of State
START	Syria Transition Assistance Response Team
UNDP	United Nations Development Program
USAID	U.S. Agency for International Development
USIP	U.S. Institute of Peace

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September 27, 2018

The Honorable James Lankford
Chairman
Subcommittee on Regulatory Affairs and Federal Management
Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs
United States Senate

Dear Mr. Chairman:

The U.S. government has invested tens of billions of dollars during the past decade in efforts to counter overseas threats, including countering violent extremism in the Middle East and Africa and addressing instability in fragile and conflict-affected states. Weak governance, political instability, corruption, and lack of economic opportunity are some of the factors fueling conflict and violent extremism. The 2017 National Security Strategy cites violent extremism and weak governance as causes of instability in various regions of the world that threatens U.S. interests. The strategy commits to strengthening fragile states in order to prevent threats against the United States and prevent the reemergence of violent extremist groups. The strategy also identifies the integration of U.S. political, economic, and military power and influence as a force that can deter aggression and help set the conditions for peace and prosperity. The results the U.S. government seeks to achieve under this strategy require the coordinated effort of multiple federal agencies and organizations.

You asked us to review U.S. conflict prevention, mitigation, and stabilization efforts abroad. This report (1) describes examples of conflict prevention, mitigation, and stabilization efforts that U.S. agencies and the U.S. Institute of Peace (USIP) conducted in Iraq, Nigeria, and Syria and their goals in fiscal year 2017 and (2) examines the extent to which U.S. agencies and USIP incorporated key collaboration practices to coordinate their efforts.

To address both objectives, we reviewed the conflict prevention, mitigation, and stabilization efforts of the Departments of State (State) and Defense (DOD), the U.S. Agency for International Development

(USAID), and USIP.¹ We reviewed relevant program, coordination, strategy, and planning documents and interviewed State, USAID, DOD, and USIP officials at headquarters and in the field with regard to specific efforts in Iraq, Nigeria, and Syria. We conducted work in Washington, D.C.; Iraq; Nigeria; and Jordan and held teleconferences with officials in Syria, Turkey, and Kuwait.² We focused on Iraq, Nigeria, and Syria based on several criteria, including U.S. national security interests, countries with ongoing conflict, countries where all three agencies and USIP initially reported that they conducted relevant efforts in fiscal year 2017, prior GAO reporting, and input from agencies and USIP. We cannot generalize our findings from these three countries to the other countries where these agencies have conflict prevention, mitigation, and stabilization efforts.

To describe examples of conflict prevention, mitigation, and stabilization efforts that U.S. agencies and USIP conducted in Iraq, Nigeria, and Syria and their goals in fiscal year 2017, we collected, synthesized, and summarized information from State, USAID, DOD, and USIP. We obtained the definitions of conflict prevention, mitigation, and stabilization from each entity to the extent each entity used and defined these terms. To collect the data describing the efforts and their goals from each agency and USIP, we developed a standardized data collection instrument. Within the data collection instrument, we asked agencies to use their own terms, definitions, and categorizations of efforts to report their efforts by country, specifically, for Iraq, Nigeria, and Syria. We defined efforts as programs, initiatives, and in some cases, projects.³ We

¹Although not included in our review, agencies such as the Departments of Homeland Security, Justice, and the Treasury have also supported U.S. conflict prevention, mitigation, and stabilization efforts abroad. For example, the Departments of Homeland Security and Justice have conducted efforts to develop foreign counterparts' justice and security capabilities. The United States also funds efforts abroad through international organizations such as the United Nations. We confirmed with officials from the Departments of Homeland Security and Justice that State, USAID, and DOD are the primary U.S. agencies that participate in mechanisms to coordinate U.S. conflict prevention, mitigation, and stabilization efforts abroad.

²U.S. coordination of assistance to Syria, at the field-level, is conducted from U.S. missions in countries in the region, including Jordan, Turkey, and Kuwait. The United States does not have an embassy in Syria.

³We did not include broader agency efforts, such as diplomatic and defense activities, which were not reported in the data collection instrument.

reviewed the reported data and supporting documents and obtained clarification from agency officials where needed.⁴

To examine the extent to which U.S. agencies and USIP incorporated key collaboration practices to coordinate their conflict prevention, mitigation, and stabilization efforts, we analyzed information about their coordination using six of seven key practices for implementing interagency collaborative mechanisms that we have previously identified and that were applicable to our review.⁵ We assessed coordination of agency and USIP efforts for conflict prevention, mitigation, and stabilization as a whole because, as indicated above, the agencies did not always distinguish their coordination efforts to address conflict using the same terms or categorization of efforts. Where information was available, we assessed whether the agencies and USIP had generally incorporated or not incorporated the six selected key practices to coordinate their efforts between State, USAID, DOD, and USIP at the headquarters level and for our selected countries of Iraq, Nigeria, and Syria. To make this determination, we reviewed agency and USIP documents and conducted interviews about interagency collaboration activities with officials from State, USAID, DOD, and USIP. During the course of our work, State, USAID, and DOD released the 2018 *Stabilization Assistance Review: A Framework for Maximizing the Effectiveness of U.S. Government Efforts to Stabilize Conflict-Affected Areas* (hereafter referred to as the SAR).⁶ We reviewed the contents of that report and interviewed agency officials associated with it to better understand how the report's findings may be related to the key collaboration practices applicable to our review.

⁴We recognize that some entities may have included programs that other entities would not have included, even though both entities' programs may have had many similarities, because of the agencies' differing definitions and terms.

⁵GAO, *Managing for Results: Key Considerations for Implementing Interagency Collaborative Mechanisms*, [GAO-12-1022](#) (Washington, D.C.: Sept. 27, 2012). We assessed the key practices of outcomes and accountability, bridging organizational cultures, leadership, clarity of roles and responsibilities, participants, and written guidance and agreements. We did not include the key practice of resources in the scope of this review.

⁶Department of State, U.S. Agency for International Development, and Department of Defense, *Stabilization Assistance Review: A Framework for Maximizing the Effectiveness of U.S. Government Efforts to Stabilize Conflict-Affected Areas*, 2018. The SAR framework was approved by the Secretaries of State and Defense and the USAID Administrator and publically released in June 2018.

Although the National Security Council (NSC) is responsible for coordination of security-related activities and functions of the executive departments and agencies, the NSC did not respond to our request for documents and interviews. We mitigated this limitation by interviewing other relevant agency officials and reviewing other available documentation, as described above. We used our analysis of agency and USIP documents and the results of our interviews with officials to assess collaboration practices among State, USAID, DOD, and USIP. To aid in our analysis of coordination from our review of documents and interviews, we compared descriptions from State, DOD, USAID, and USIP of each of their relevant efforts in Iraq, Nigeria, and Syria to assess for any unnecessary duplication. As discussed above, some entities may have included programs that other entities would not have included because of differences in how the agencies defined the terms in our scope. As a result, our analysis only includes the list of programs provided by the agencies to assess for duplication. Further details about our scope and methodology can be found in appendix I.

We conducted this performance audit from April 2017 to September 2018 in accordance with generally accepted government auditing standards. Those standards require that we plan and perform the audit to obtain sufficient, appropriate evidence to provide a reasonable basis for our findings and conclusions based on our audit objectives. We believe that the evidence obtained provides a reasonable basis for our findings and conclusions based on our audit objectives.

Background

Preventing Conflict and Seeking Stability Abroad Are U.S. Priorities

The National Security Strategy released in December 2017 states that the U.S. government has a national security interest in addressing conflict and instability in fragile and failing nations. The strategy commits to strengthening nations where state weakness may foster threats such as violent extremism. The strategy also prioritizes efforts that empower reform-minded governments, people, and civil society in order to address the drivers of state fragility. In the SAR, a joint review of U.S. stabilization efforts—diplomacy, assistance, and defense—the Secretaries of State and Defense and the USAID Administrator stated that increasing stability and reducing violence in conflict-affected areas are essential to meeting U.S. national security goals. State and USAID’s joint strategic plans have

identified strategic objectives to counter instability, transnational crime, and violence that threaten U.S. interests.⁷ Notably, the plan for fiscal years 2018–2022 states that the agencies will make early investments in preventing conflict, atrocities, and violent extremism before they spread. The 2018 National Defense Strategy identifies objectives to deter adversaries from aggression against U.S. interests and prevent terrorists from directing or supporting external operations against the United States and its citizens and allies overseas.

Additionally, the Quadrennial Diplomacy and Development Review released in 2015 and covering 2015 to 2019 outlines the lines of effort that fall under State and USAID’s commitment to prevent and mitigate conflict. These lines of effort include countering violent extremism, strengthening U.S. and international capacity to prevent conflict, preventing atrocities, establishing frameworks for action in fragile states, strengthening partner capacity to protect civilians and restore peace, and eliminating the threat of destabilizing weapons. In the Quadrennial Defense Review released in 2014 and covering 2014–2018, DOD also asserts that “the surest way to stop potential attacks is to prevent threats from developing.” The 2014 Quadrennial Defense Review further states that tackling root drivers of conflict, including building capacity with allied and partner militaries, and sustaining a global effort to detect, disrupt, and defeat terrorist plots are part of DOD’s efforts to protect the United States.

U.S. foreign policy strategies and plans identify the Middle East and Africa as strategically important regions affected by conflict and instability. In countries such as Iraq, Nigeria, and Syria, the United States is working to address drivers of conflict and stabilize areas liberated from violent extremist groups.

- **Iraq.** As we have previously reported, U.S. government efforts for the global war on terrorism in Iraq began in 2003.⁸ Since the removal of the Ba’ath regime and the construction of a new government, Iraq has experienced varying levels of political instability, sectarianism, and

⁷State and USAID, *Joint Strategic Plan FY 2018–2022* (Washington, D.C.: February 2018) and State and USAID, *Joint Strategic Plan FY 2014–2017* (Washington, D.C.: March 2014).

⁸GAO, *Overseas Contingency Operations: Observations on the Use of Force Management Levels in Afghanistan, Iraq, and Syria*, [GAO-17-246T](#) (Washington, D.C.: Dec. 1, 2016).

conflict.⁹ In December 2011, the last units of U.S. Forces–Iraq were withdrawn from that country.¹⁰ After their departure, the United States continued to provide assistance such as training and equipment to Iraq’s military and security forces and funding for programs to strengthen political institutions and civil society organizations and to promote economic growth in Iraq.¹¹ In 2014, the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS) emerged as a major force in Iraq, destabilizing various areas of the country according to reporting from State and USAID.¹² As of December 2017, Iraqi forces, with support from the United States and the Global Coalition to Defeat ISIS (Coalition), had liberated the country’s territory from the control of ISIS, according to State (see fig. 1).¹³ According to a State official, although ISIS no longer holds Iraqi territory, it remains a terrorist threat.

⁹GAO, *Iraq and Afghanistan: Security, Economic, and Governance Challenges to Rebuilding Efforts Should be Addressed in U.S. Strategies*, [GAO-09-476T](#) (Washington, D.C.: Mar. 25, 2009) and *Stabilizing and Rebuilding Iraq: Conditions in Iraq Are Conducive to Fraud, Waste, and Abuse*, [GAO-07-525T](#) (Washington, D.C.: Apr. 23, 2007).

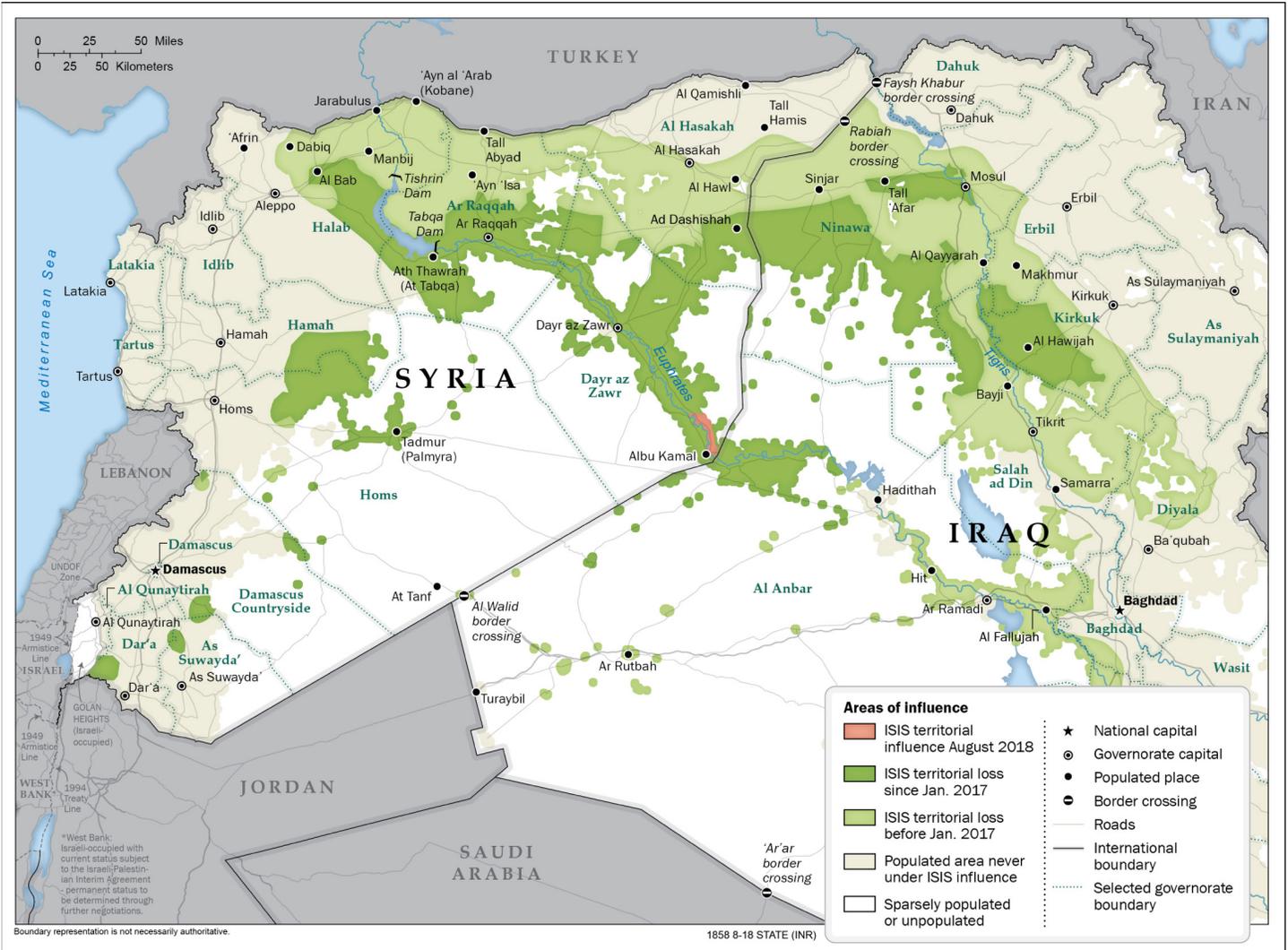
¹⁰GAO, *Mission Iraq: State and DOD Face Challenges in Finalizing Support and Security Capabilities*, [GAO-12-856T](#) (Washington, D.C.: June 28, 2012).

¹¹GAO, *Countering ISIS and Its Effects: Key Issues for Oversight*, [GAO-17-687SP](#) (Washington, D.C.: July 18, 2017) and White House Office of the Press Secretary, *Fact Sheet: U.S.-Iraq Cooperation* (Washington, D.C.: Nov. 1, 2013).

¹²ISIS was initially founded as al Qaeda in Iraq in 2004. The group rebranded itself as the Islamic State in Iraq and Syria in April 2013, engendering conflict with other terrorist actors in the region, such as the Nusra Front in Syria. ISIS is also variously referred to as the Islamic State of Iraq and al-Sham, Daesh, and the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL).

¹³The Global Coalition to Defeat ISIS (also referred to by other names such as the Global Coalition to Counter ISIL and the Global Coalition against Daesh) was formed in September 2014. The coalition consisted of 78 partners as of September 2018. As we have previously reported, the coalition aims to counter ISIS and since its creation many of the participating countries have provided a range of assistance including training, equipping, advising, and enabling support, such as intelligence, surveillance, reconnaissance, and air strikes. See [GAO-17-687SP](#).

Figure 1: Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS) Areas of Influence as of August 2018



Source: Office of the Special Presidential Envoy to Defeat ISIS, U.S. Department of State. | GAO-18-654

- **Syria.** Syria’s instability is largely caused by an ongoing civil war that began with a government crackdown on antigovernment protests in March 2011.¹⁴ USAID has reported that the conflict has led to

¹⁴Congressional Research Service, *Armed Conflict in Syria: Overview and U.S. Response*, 7-5700 (Washington, D.C.: Feb. 27, 2018).

economic collapse, a breakdown in services and governance, and instability, which violent extremist groups, including ISIS, have sought to exploit.¹⁵ Millions of Syrians have become refugees or internally displaced due to this crisis, according to reporting from the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. In May 2012, the United States began providing nonlethal aid to Syrian opposition forces, and in September 2014, the United States began air strikes against ISIS components in Syria.¹⁶ In January 2015, DOD created the Syria Train and Equip program to provide assistance, including training and equipment, to vetted members of the Syrian opposition and to support efforts to counter ISIS and liberate territory from ISIS.¹⁷ For populations that remain in Syria, governance entities and institutions face challenges in delivering services to their communities, according to USAID. As of July 2018, DOD has reported that the Syrian Democratic Forces, with Coalition support, continued efforts to defeat ISIS in the middle Euphrates River Valley (see fig. 1 above). Additionally, the civil war between Syrian opposition forces and the Assad regime was ongoing as of July 2018, according to reporting from the United Nations.

- **Nigeria.** There are multiple sources of instability across Nigeria. The terrorist groups Boko Haram and its offshoot ISIS-West Africa have destabilized areas in northeast Nigeria and the greater Lake Chad Region leaving over 2 million people displaced and millions more dependent upon humanitarian assistance as of June 2018, according to USAID reporting. Also, in the Middle Belt and Northwest of the country, according to a State official and reporting from Search for Common Ground, there is rural violence among civilians which includes criminal attacks, banditry, cattle rustling, and long-standing intercommunal conflicts between farming and herding communities.¹⁸ This violence has exacerbated tensions between the populations in the north and south and among ethnic and religious groups across the country. Figure 2 shows incidents involving fatalities due to conflict

¹⁵[GAO-17-687SP](#).

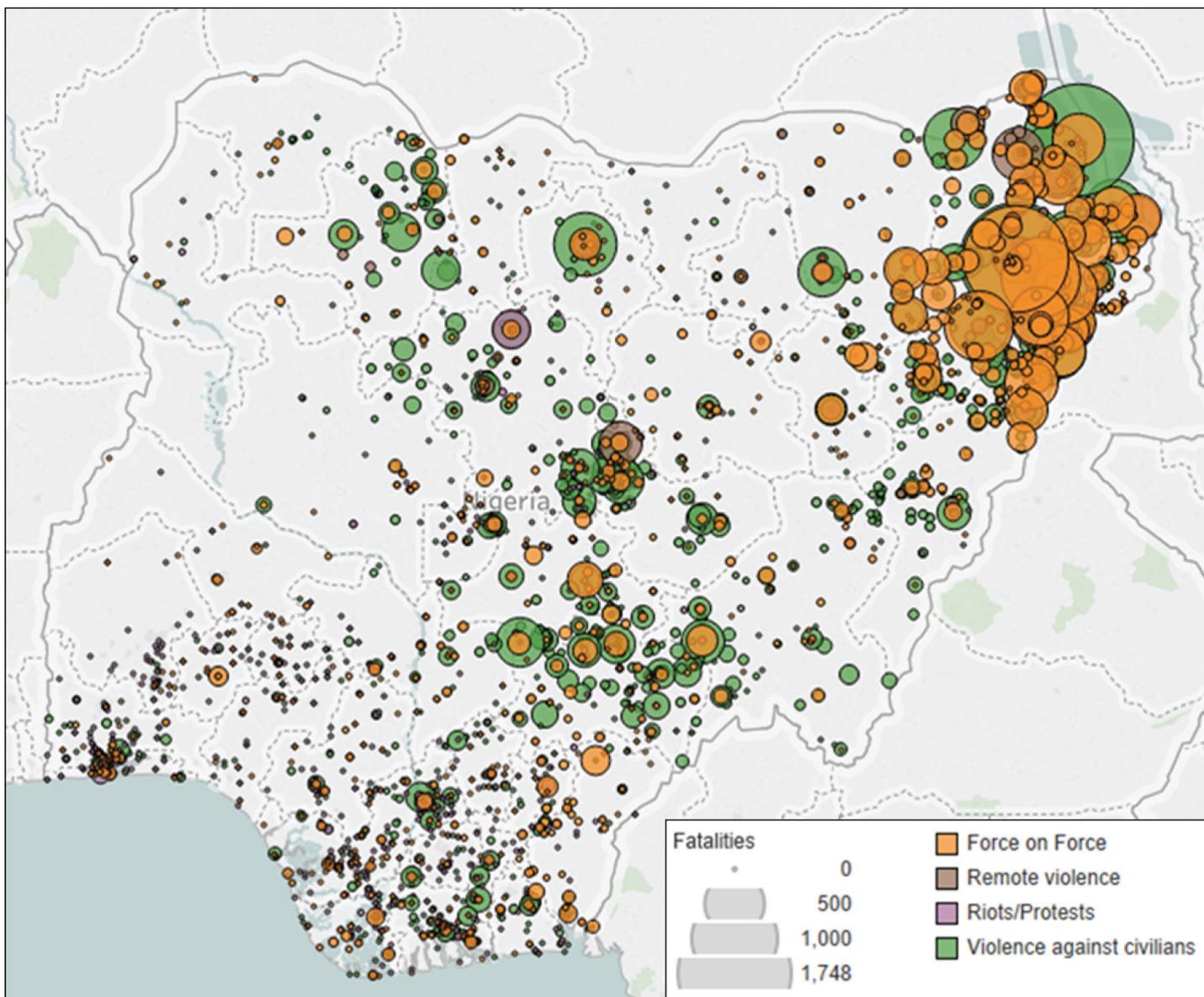
¹⁶Congressional Research Service, *Armed Conflict in Syria: Overview and U.S. Response*.

¹⁷[GAO-17-687SP](#).

¹⁸Chom Bagu and Katie Smith, *Past is Prologue: Criminality & Reprisal Attacks in Nigeria's Middle Belt* (Abuja, Nigeria, and Washington, D.C.: Search for Common Ground, 2017).

and violent extremism in Nigeria from January 1, 2012 to September 8, 2018.

Figure 2: Fatalities from Conflict and Violent Extremism in Nigeria from January 1, 2012 to September 8, 2018



Source: Department of State Bureau of Conflict and Stabilization Operations. | GAO-18-654

Note: "Force on Force" refers to any incident where the participants on both sides (perpetrators and targets) were armed. "Remote violence" refers to violence using distance or stand-off weapons, such as air strikes, missiles, rockets, mines, and improvised explosive devices. "Violence against civilians" refers to the deliberate killing of unarmed civilians by armed actors.

Multiple U.S. Entities Conduct Efforts to Address Conflict Abroad

The U.S. government, through federal agencies and federally funded organizations, supports numerous efforts to address instability and prevent conflicts abroad.

- **State and USAID.** These are the principal agencies conducting U.S. foreign policy and international development and humanitarian assistance. State is the Executive Branch's lead foreign affairs agency. State leads U.S. foreign policy through diplomacy, advocacy, and assistance. USAID is the U.S. government's lead international development and humanitarian assistance agency with a key role in U.S. efforts to ensure stability, prevent conflict, and build citizen-responsive local governance.
- **DOD.** While DOD's primary mission is to provide combat-ready military forces to deter war and protect the United States, DOD also provides support to foreign disaster relief through humanitarian assistance and stabilization efforts across all phases of conflict and military operations, and in combat and non-combat environments.
- **U.S. Institute of Peace (USIP).** USIP is an independent national institute, founded by Congress, to promote international peace and the resolution of conflicts among the nations and peoples of the world without recourse to violence. USIP is governed by a bipartisan Board of Directors, which includes the Secretaries of State and Defense or their designees, the President or Vice President of the National Defense University, and 12 others. USIP's primary funding comes from congressional appropriation and can be supplemented by funds from U.S. government partners.¹⁹ USIP staff work abroad and at its headquarters in Washington, D.C. USIP initiates its own work and enters into interagency agreements with U.S. agencies such as State, USAID, and DOD, according to USIP officials. Because USIP is not an agency within the executive branch, it is not a formal participant in interagency national security policy processes involving State, USAID, and DOD, according to State.

U.S. agencies and USIP are engaged in efforts to counter violent extremism and address conflict in countries affected by instability and violent conflicts, including Iraq, Syria, and Nigeria. For example, as areas are liberated from ISIS in Iraq and Syria, the United States is working with its partners to try to consolidate gains, reduce levels of local instability,

¹⁹Subject to limitations specified by statute, USIP may obtain grants and contracts and receive gifts and contributions from government at all levels. See 22 U.S.C. § 4604(h).

peaceably manage change, and build the capacity of local governance entities. To improve the effectiveness of these efforts, U.S. agencies have evaluated lessons from similar efforts in countries such as Afghanistan and Iraq. The SAR and assessments from the Special Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction and the Special Inspector General for Iraq Reconstruction are examples of U.S. government initiatives to identify lessons learned from past U.S. efforts.²⁰

Key Practices That Can Enhance Interagency Collaboration

In prior work, we have identified key collaboration practices that can be used to assess collaboration at federal agencies (see fig. 3).²¹ These practices can help agencies implement actions to operate across boundaries, including fostering open lines of communication, and establish goals based on what the agencies share in common. Additionally, clarifying roles and responsibilities allows agencies to determine who will do what, organize their joint and individual efforts, and facilitate decision making. We have previously found that improving coordination and collaboration across agencies can potentially help agencies reduce or better manage fragmentation, overlap, and duplication.²²

²⁰For example, Special Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction, *Quarterly Report to the United States Congress* (Arlington, Va.: Apr. 30, 2018) and Special Inspector General for Iraq Reconstruction, *Learning from Iraq: A Final Report from the Special Inspector General for Iraq Reconstruction* (Arlington, Va.: March 2013).

²¹[GAO-12-1022](#). GAO's prior work applies the term "collaboration" broadly to include interagency activities that others have variously defined as "cooperation," "coordination," "integration," or "networking." See GAO, *Results-Oriented Government: Practices That Can Help Enhance and Sustain Collaboration among Federal Agencies*, [GAO-06-15](#) (Washington, D.C.: Oct. 21, 2005).

²²GAO has developed and uses standard definitions for fragmentation, overlap, and duplication. Fragmentation refers to those circumstances in which more than one federal agency (or more than one organization within an agency) is involved in the same broad area of national need and opportunities exist to improve service delivery. Overlap occurs when multiple agencies or programs have similar goals, engage in similar activities or strategies to achieve them, or target similar beneficiaries. Duplication occurs when two or more agencies or programs are engaged in the same activities or provide the same services to the same beneficiaries. For more information on GAO's work on fragmentation, overlap, and duplication in the federal government, see GAO, *Government Efficiency and Effectiveness: Opportunities to Reduce Fragmentation, Overlap, and Duplication and Achieve Other Financial Benefits*, [GAO-18-498T](#) (Washington, D.C.: Apr. 26, 2018) and *Government Efficiency and Effectiveness: Opportunities to Reduce Fragmentation, Overlap, and Duplication and Achieve Other Financial Benefits*, [GAO-17-562T](#) (Washington, D.C.: Apr. 26, 2017).

Figure 3: Key Considerations for Implementing Collaborative Mechanisms

Key features		Key considerations
	Outcomes and accountability	Have short-term and long-term outcomes been clearly defined? Is there a way to track and monitor their progress?
	Bridging organizational cultures	What are the missions and organizational cultures of the participating agencies? Have agencies agreed on common terminology and definitions?
	Leadership	How will leadership be sustained over the long-term? If leadership is shared, have roles and responsibilities been clearly identified and agreed upon?
	Clarity of roles and responsibilities	Have participating agencies clarified roles and responsibilities?
	Participants	Have all relevant participants been included? Do they have the ability to commit resources for their agency?
	Resources	How will the collaborative mechanism be funded and staffed? Have online collaboration tools been developed?
	Written guidance and agreements	If appropriate, have participating agencies documented their agreement regarding how they will be collaborating? Have they developed ways to continually update and monitor these agreements?

Source: GAO. | GAO-18-654

Note: The key features and considerations listed above are related to our previously identified key collaboration practices (GAO, *Results-Oriented Government: Practices That Can Help Enhance and Sustain Collaboration among Federal Agencies*, [GAO-06-15](#) [Washington, D.C.: Oct. 21, 2005]), and as a group, can be referred to as leading collaboration practices.

U.S. Agencies and USIP Conduct Various Efforts to Prevent and Mitigate Violent Conflict and Stabilize Conflict-Affected Areas Abroad

State, USAID, DOD, and USIP reported that they have conducted a variety of efforts in Iraq, Nigeria, and Syria aimed at preventing and mitigating violent conflicts and stabilizing areas affected by such conflicts.²³ In response to our request, each agency and USIP provided descriptions and goals for their specific program-level or project-level efforts in Iraq, Nigeria, and Syria (and in neighboring countries for Syria). To identify these efforts, each agency and USIP used its own terminology and definitions that were in place in fiscal year 2017.

Efforts reported by State as active in fiscal year 2017. State reported that it conducted a range of ongoing conflict mitigation and stabilization efforts to address violent conflict in Iraq, Nigeria, and Syria, in fiscal year 2017.²⁴ State, in addition to conducting its own efforts, reported that it sometimes conducted these efforts through grants to implementing partners or through interagency agreements with USIP.

- For Iraq, State reported a list of three individual efforts and four categories of other efforts as active in fiscal year 2017.²⁵ These efforts included, for example, antiterrorism training and equipment for law enforcement; promotion of democratic governance and protection of basic human rights; support for religious and ethnic minority groups, internally displaced persons (IDP), and returnees; and clearance of explosive hazards. These programs were intended to help defeat ISIS

²³U.S. agencies and USIP also use alternative or related terms, such as “conflict management,” “conflict resolution,” and “reconciliation.” For the purposes of this report, we use the terms “conflict prevention, mitigation, and stabilization.” At the beginning of our review, while State and USAID had a standardized definition for conflict mitigation and stabilization activities that they used to categorize and track those activities within their foreign assistance framework, there were no government-wide definitions for conflict prevention, mitigation, and stabilization. However, in March 2018, State, USAID, and DOD reached agreement on a standardized definition of stabilization. In its technical comments to our draft report, State indicated that the agencies have begun to collaborate on the development of a definition for “conflict prevention.”

²⁴State defined conflict mitigation and stabilization efforts as programs that “reduce the threat or impact of violent conflict and promote the peaceful resolution of differences, mitigate violence if it has already broken out, establish a framework for peace and reconciliation, and provide for the transition from conflict to post-conflict environments.” According to State and USAID officials, the term “conflict prevention” is not formally defined and could be interpreted to cover their entire portfolios of diplomatic and foreign assistance efforts. State and USAID include some efforts that could be considered as conflict prevention in their definition and categorization of conflict mitigation and stabilization efforts, such as preventative diplomacy.

²⁵In some cases, State provided categories of programs when State considered the individual programs to be sensitive but unclassified information.

and transnational terror groups, improve governance and rule of law, and promote reconciliation and the safe return of displaced Iraqis. Figure 4 depicts clearance operations for explosive remnants of war at a water treatment facility in Iraq supported by State.

Figure 4: State-Supported Explosive Remnants of War Clearance Operations at a Water Treatment Facility in Iraq



Source: Department of State (State); photo courtesy of Janus Global Operations. | GAO-18-654

- For Nigeria, State reported 21 efforts as active in fiscal year 2017. State supported programs to prevent and counter violent extremism through media programming, human rights training, police and law enforcement training and equipment, conflict early warning and response systems, and women's and youth empowerment. According to State, these programs were intended to aid in the fight against Boko Haram and ISIS-West Africa by countering the radicalization process that leads individuals to violent extremism, protecting civilians from terrorist groups, and assisting the victims of Boko Haram and ISIS-West Africa and their host communities. To address crime and communal conflict in other regions of Nigeria, State reported that it conducts human rights and investigative training for Nigerian police, supports efforts to teach conflict resolution skills to youth, convenes dialogues between farmer and herder stakeholders to develop conflict resolution mechanisms, and other efforts.
- For Syria, State reported nine efforts as active in fiscal year 2017. State reported efforts that included providing training, equipment, and

stipends to Free Syrian Police and education directorates in opposition-controlled parts of the country, and building the capacity of civil society and advocacy organizations, local councils, and civilian networks.²⁶ According to State, these programs were intended to support the opposition and help counter violent extremists, such as ISIS and al Qaeda in Syria.

Appendix II presents a full list of State's reported conflict mitigation and stabilization efforts and their respective goals for Iraq, Nigeria, and Syria, active in fiscal year 2017.

Efforts reported by USAID as active in fiscal year 2017. USAID reported that it conducted a range of ongoing conflict mitigation and stabilization efforts to address violent conflict in Iraq, Nigeria, and Syria, in fiscal year 2017.²⁷ USAID reported that it primarily conducted these efforts through grants and contracts awarded to implementing partners.

- For Iraq, USAID reported one effort as active in fiscal year 2017. USAID, along with other international donors, supplies funding to the United Nations Development Program's (UNDP) Funding Facility for Stabilization. The UNDP, at the request of the Prime Minister of Iraq, and with support from leading members of the Coalition to Degrade and Defeat the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL), established the Funding Facility for Stabilization in June 2015 to help rapidly stabilize newly retaken areas. The aim is to help restore confidence in the leading role of the Iraqi government in these areas and give populations a sense of progress and forward momentum. According to USAID, the Funding Facility for Stabilization supports restoration of essential services and efforts to kick-start the local economy, enabling internally displaced persons to return to their homes.
- For Nigeria, USAID reported five efforts as active in fiscal year 2017. USAID reported that it works through its implementing partners to conduct a variety of ongoing country-specific efforts including working with youth to develop countering violent extremism (CVE) action plans, building the capacity of civil society organizations and religious

²⁶The Free Syrian Police is an unarmed civilian police force established by police officers who defected from the Assad regime and who offer non-contentious community policing services in areas liberated from regime and extremist forces, according to State officials.

²⁷USAID defined conflict mitigation and stabilization efforts as programs that "reduce the threat or impact of violent conflict and promote the peaceful resolution of differences, mitigate violence if it has already broken out, establish a framework for peace and reconciliation, and provide for the transition from conflict to post-conflict environments."

leaders, and providing education for displaced persons and host communities. According to USAID, these efforts are intended to counter violent extremism from Boko Haram and ISIS-West Africa, reduce conflict between herders and farmers, and support state and local government ownership for the continued education of internally displaced children.

- For Syria, USAID reported five efforts as active in fiscal year 2017. USAID reported that it supports a multidonor trust fund to restore essential services and works through an implementing partner to enable local councils' ability to restore essential services. USAID reported that it also works through implementing partners to support democratic institutions, livelihoods, and local nongovernmental organizations. According to USAID, the intent of these programs is to enable the early recovery of areas liberated from ISIS by strengthening resistance to extremists, democratic processes, and the influence of strategic moderate actors. Figure 5 depicts a solar array installation that provides renewable energy for a drinking water pumping station in Dar'a Province, Syria, supported by a USAID essential services program.

Figure 5: USAID-Supported Solar Array Installation Providing Renewable Energy for a Drinking Water Pumping Station in Dar'a Province, Syria



Source: U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID). | GAO-18-654

Appendix III presents a full list of USAID’s reported conflict mitigation and stabilization efforts and their respective goals for Iraq, Nigeria, and Syria, active in fiscal year 2017.

Efforts reported by DOD as active in fiscal year 2017.²⁸ DOD reported that it conducted stabilization efforts to address violent conflict in Iraq and Syria, in fiscal year 2017.²⁹

- In Iraq, DOD reported one effort as active in fiscal year 2017. Medical Staff of the Combined Joint Forces Land Component Command—Operation Inherent Resolve provided immediate medical trauma supplies to the World Health Organization to fill a gap in medical supplies available to treat injured civilians. According to DOD, the project was coordinated with State and USAID and was funded through the Overseas Humanitarian, Disaster, and Civil Aid (OHDACA) appropriation. According to DOD, this project was intended to increase the chance of survival for civilians affected by military operations, increase civilian confidence in the government and the humanitarian assistance community, and provide access, influence, and visibility to DOD.

²⁸According to DOD, although DOD conducted no stabilization efforts in Nigeria in fiscal year 2017, U.S. Army Civil Affairs (CA) has planned for and will advise and conduct civil-military operations training with the Nigerian Armed Forces in August 2018 using fiscal year 2017 funds. The purpose of this training is to develop their capabilities in support of cross-spectrum operations and regional security challenges. This ongoing initiative is intended to give Nigeria the capability to incorporate civil-military operations skill sets into its military operations and provide support to internal stability operations.

²⁹For the purposes of reporting DOD’s fiscal year 2017 stabilization efforts, DOD officials defined “stabilization” as “an integrated civilian and military process applied in designated fragile and conflict-affected areas outside the United States to establish civil security, address drivers of instability, and create conditions for sustainable stability—a condition characterized by local political systems that can peaceably manage conflict and change; effective and accountable institutions that can provide essential services; and societies that respect fundamental human rights and the rule of law.” According to Office of the Undersecretary of Defense for Policy officials, this definition was meant to bridge the existing 2009 definition of “stability operations” provided in DOD Instruction 3000.05 with the interagency definition for “stabilization” being developed as part of the 2017–2018 Stabilization Assistance Review. According to Office of the Undersecretary of Defense for Policy officials, the definition of stabilization will be revised in fiscal year 2018 in DOD Directive 3000.05 to reflect the interagency agreed-upon definition in the SAR. When the new definition is approved in DOD Directive 3000.05, efforts supported by the Overseas Humanitarian, Disaster, and Civil Aid (OHDACA) appropriation will no longer be considered stabilization efforts. According to DOD officials, the humanitarian assistance efforts DOD reported for fiscal year 2017 complemented broader U.S. government stabilization efforts.

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- In Syria, DOD reported eight efforts as active in fiscal year 2017. Civil Affairs personnel of Special Operations Joint Task Force—Operation Inherent Resolve provided classroom furniture and school supplies; cold weather items such as jackets, hats, gloves, socks and blankets; and in one area food, cooking fuel, construction material, and garbage removal. The projects were often managed through the local councils. According to DOD, the projects were coordinated with State and USAID and were funded through the OHDACA appropriation. Generally, according to DOD, the projects were intended to assist vulnerable populations, protect them from ISIL, and support local councils, while also providing access, visibility, and influence for DOD forces.

Appendix IV presents a full list of DOD’s reported conflict stabilization efforts and their respective goals for Iraq and Syria, active in fiscal year 2017.

Efforts reported by USIP as active in fiscal year 2017. Although USIP generally refers to all of its work as “conflict prevention and resolution,” USIP officials stated that all of USIP’s efforts fit under the general umbrella of conflict prevention, mitigation, and stabilization and thus reported all of USIP’s efforts abroad for Iraq, Nigeria, and Syria (and in neighboring countries for Syria) that were active in fiscal year 2017.³⁰ USIP reported that it conducts its efforts in conjunction with local staff and implementing partners. According to USIP, some USIP efforts are supported through interagency agreements with U.S. agencies.

- For Iraq, USIP reported eight efforts as active in fiscal year 2017. USIP reported that it facilitated targeted dialogues among Iraq’s religious minorities to address security and governance challenges to reduce the likelihood of recurring violence and enable the return of IDPs. These dialogues created a monitoring framework to provide early warnings of potential violence. USIP also reported that it facilitated dialogues among Iraqis intended to prevent revenge acts of violence, facilitate the return of the internally displaced, and increase the resilience of communities to violent extremism from ISIS or others. Additionally, USIP reported that it provided both governmental and nongovernmental organizations with training in conflict management and identified influential religious leaders in specific conflict zones for

³⁰USIP officials indicated that since the terms—conflict prevention, mitigation, and stabilization—are too general to have operational meaning, USIP did not have formal definitions for these terms in fiscal year 2017.

future Iraqi-led mediations, dialogues, and peace and reconciliation efforts. Further, USIP reported that it conducted multiple justice and security dialogues that included police and government officials and citizens in areas affected by the aftermath of ISIS to collect and disseminate lessons learned and best practices.

- For Nigeria, USIP reported 14 efforts as active in fiscal year 2017. USIP reported that it conducted training programs, facilitated dialogues, established working groups, collected and shared lessons learned and best practices, and conducted in-country research and assessments involving civilian populations, nongovernmental organizations, police, and youth. The intent of these programs, according to USIP, was to reduce violent conflict and its root causes, strengthen the country's recovery from Boko Haram, and prevent the emergence of other extremist groups in support of long-term stability. In addition, according to USIP, the institute connected U.S. policymakers with key Nigerian officials at the subnational levels who wield significant influence in Nigeria's federal government system but with whom the United States has had limited contact. Figure 6 depicts a USIP symposium in Washington, D.C., funded by State, which included governors from states across northern Nigeria to foster key exchanges and critical discussions with leading American and international experts on the drivers of violent conflict in the region and how to resolve them.

Figure 6: U.S. Institute of Peace Conflict Resolution Symposium to Facilitate Key Exchanges and Discussions among Northern Nigeria Governors and American and International Experts



Source: © jbdodane.com. www.jbdodane.com | GAO-18-654

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- For Syria, USIP reported three efforts as active in fiscal year 2017. USIP reported that it held dialogues with interfaith and other key leaders to strengthen civil society's engagement and coordinating role with civic, religious, and tribal leaders on conflict management and prevention. For one effort, according to USIP, it has three ongoing grants related to the Syria conflict in neighboring countries that focus on reducing tensions associated with the absorption of Syrian refugees.

Appendix V presents a full list of USIP's reported efforts and their respective goals for Iraq, Nigeria, and Syria, active in fiscal year 2017.

U.S. Agencies and USIP Have Incorporated Aspects of Key Collaboration Practices for Their Conflict Prevention, Mitigation, and Stabilization Efforts but Have Not Documented Their Agreement

State, USAID, DOD, and, where appropriate, USIP have incorporated aspects of key collaboration practices to coordinate their conflict prevention, mitigation, and stabilization efforts for Iraq, Nigeria, and Syria. However, the agencies have not documented their agreement on coordination for stabilization efforts in conflict-affected areas through formal written guidance and agreements that address key collaboration practices.³¹ The agencies have individually and jointly established some common outcomes for stabilization efforts in Iraq, Nigeria, and Syria. Additionally, State, USAID, DOD, and USIP have generally taken steps to bridge their organizational cultures; identify sources of leadership that facilitate coordination; establish roles and responsibilities; and include relevant participants for their conflict prevention, mitigation, and stabilization efforts in these countries. During the course of our review, State, USAID, and DOD released the SAR, which identified areas where U.S. government coordination for stabilization efforts in conflict-affected areas could be improved; however, the agencies have not documented their agreement as to how they will coordinate these efforts in formal written guidance and agreements that address key collaboration

³¹We assessed the extent to which U.S. agencies and USIP incorporated key collaboration practices to coordinate their conflict prevention, mitigation, and stabilization efforts for Iraq, Nigeria, and Syria using the applicable six of our seven key practices for enhancing interagency collaboration. See [GAO-12-1022](#).

practices.³² Because multiple federal entities are engaged in U.S. conflict prevention, mitigation, and stabilization efforts in Iraq, Nigeria, and Syria, there is some inherent fragmentation in their efforts as well as the potential for overlap and duplication.³³ According to key practices for enhancing interagency collaboration, articulating interagency agreement on collaborative efforts in formal documents, can strengthen those collaborative efforts and could reduce the potential for unnecessary fragmentation, overlap, and duplication.

Outcomes and Accountability

We previously found that establishing common outcomes can help agencies shape and define the purpose of their collaborative efforts. According to a senior State official, the classified country strategies maintained by the National Security Council (NSC) may contain common outcomes for some U.S. conflict prevention, mitigation, and stabilization efforts. However, the NSC did not respond to our requests for information regarding NSC-level country strategies for Iraq, Nigeria, and Syria.³⁴

³²See State, USAID, and DOD, *Stabilization Assistance Review: A Framework for Maximizing the Effectiveness of U.S. Government Efforts to Stabilize Conflict-Affected Areas*, 2018. The SAR was jointly conducted by State, USAID, and DOD to examine lessons learned from past U.S. stabilization efforts and to develop a framework for effective stabilization. The review's findings were based on various research methods such as a literature review; quantitative survey of U.S. government experts; and analysis of cases of U.S. engagements in Afghanistan, Iraq, Kosovo, Libya, Mali, Nigeria, Pakistan, and Somalia. According to USIP, its experts met with the SAR team to provide insights on stabilization theory and practice drawn from its own work in conflict zones.

³³GAO defines fragmentation as those circumstances in which more than one federal agency (or more than one organization within an agency) is involved in the same broad area of national need and opportunities exist to improve service delivery. Overlap can occur when multiple agencies or programs have similar goals, engage in similar activities or strategies to achieve them or target similar beneficiaries. Duplication occurs when two or more agencies or programs are engaged in the same activities or provide the same services to the same beneficiaries. See [GAO-18-498T](#) and [GAO-15-49SP](#). We recognize that there could be instances where some degree of program overlap or duplication may be warranted because of the nature or magnitude of the federal effort. During our review, we did not identify any unnecessary and significant duplication of effort.

³⁴State officials also identified the classified U.S. Strategy to Counter the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL), as a source of guidance for their efforts. As we have previously reported, the strategy was produced by an interagency process, including NSC review or approval, and released in 2014. The strategy articulated a whole of government approach for the United States to degrade ISIS over 36 months (2014–2017). The strategy has had updates and implementation plans. See [GAO-17-687SP](#).

In the absence of information from the NSC, we reviewed information provided by the agencies as well as other government documents and found that outcomes for U.S. stabilization efforts in Iraq, Nigeria, and Syria have generally been established by one or more of the agencies. For example, for its stabilization efforts for Iraq, USAID reported that its outcome metric is the return of internally displaced populations to their communities. USAID also reported that it monitors progress toward this outcome using, in part, quarterly reporting from the United Nations Development Program (UNDP), the implementer for the primary mechanism through which the United States and other donor partners fund stabilization efforts in Iraq.

Similarly, in the case of Nigeria, the U.S. government has established common outcomes and accountability mechanisms related to U.S. efforts to counter Boko Haram and ISIS-West Africa, which includes stabilization assistance. For example, the interagency, NSC-approved U.S. Strategy for Countering Boko Haram/ISIS-West Africa (March 2017),³⁵ states that the United States seeks long-term end states under which Lake Chad Basin countries, in tandem with local authorities and international partners, are able to address specific regional and community-level conditions that are drivers of conflict and that make communities vulnerable to violent extremist groups. The National Counterterrorism Center facilitates an annual assessment of this strategy, and State, USAID, and DOD review their progress toward achieving objectives in this strategy during weekly meetings, according to State officials.

For Syria, in January 2018, then-Secretary of State Tillerson identified the creation of conditions for the safe and voluntary return of Syrian refugees and internally displaced persons as one of several end states for Syria. However, agency officials reported different views regarding clarity about end states and goals for U.S. efforts in Syria. While some U.S. officials we interviewed could point to sources for U.S. strategy in Syria, other U.S. officials told us that the United States' policy and goals for Syria were unclear. State and DOD officials indicated that the U.S. goals for Syria change in response to conditions where U.S. agencies and their partners operate. A USAID official told us that events on the ground often overtake U.S. efforts, and the complicated regional dynamics also affect U.S. policy goals.

³⁵According to State, the U.S. Strategy for Countering Boko Haram/ISIS-West Africa covers Cameroon, Chad, Niger, and Nigeria.

Moreover, the U.S. government has also developed Integrated Country Strategies for Iraq and Nigeria.³⁶ The Integrated Country Strategies developed by U.S. embassies and missions may contain outcomes related to, but not necessarily specific to, U.S. conflict prevention, mitigation, and stabilization efforts abroad, according to a senior State official. According to State guidance, Integrated Country Strategies should articulate a common set of U.S. government goals and objectives in a country and may also outline performance indicators to measure progress toward each mission objective. The guidance further states that the development of these strategies should include coordination and collaboration among State, USAID, and other U.S. government agencies at the mission.

Finally, at a global-level, State, USAID, and DOD have identified a need to improve the outcomes and accountability of U.S. stabilization efforts. Specifically, the 2018 SAR recommended that State, USAID, and DOD work with relevant U.S. embassy, State regional bureaus, DOD combatant commands, and other stakeholders to develop an outcome-based political strategy for stabilization in countries where stabilization is a high priority.³⁷ The SAR notes the importance of developing an outcome-based political strategy that outlines core assumptions and achievable end states and that guides all lines of effort to ensure unity of purpose within the U.S. government. The SAR also identified a need to establish indicators to measure changes in the conflict environment and track them consistently over time and stated that doing so could facilitate more rigorous reviews by policy makers to determine whether adjustments are needed in U.S. government political strategy and objectives.

State and USIP officials reported that due to USIP's status as an independent, federally funded institute that operates outside of executive branch mechanisms, USIP is not a direct participant in processes to

³⁶The specific goals, objectives, and performance indicators in these strategies are deemed sensitive but unclassified. The U.S. government does not have an Integrated Country Strategy for Syria according to State officials.

³⁷The SAR states that this strategy should include, among other elements, desired end states, objectives, and strategic analytics to track and measure progress. A senior State official told us that, based on the results of the SAR, State, USAID, and DOD are in the process of defining common outcomes for stabilization and determining how to incorporate these outcomes into strategy development processes.

establish common outcomes and accountability mechanisms for U.S. government conflict prevention, mitigation, and stabilization efforts.

Bridging Organizational Cultures

We previously found that it is important for agencies to establish ways to operate across agency boundaries. According to State, USAID, and DOD officials, they have taken steps to bridge their different organizational cultures with regard to their conflict prevention, mitigation, and stabilization efforts for Iraq, Nigeria, and Syria. Specifically, officials said that they have developed a variety of ways to jointly operate across agency boundaries, such as through interagency groups and special coordination positions. USIP does not participate in such interagency mechanisms; however, it reported that it communicates and coordinates with State, USAID, and DOD through other means, such as through bilateral communications and interagency tabletop exercises.³⁸

Interagency Groups

State, USAID, and DOD have established various interagency groups to coordinate their efforts for Iraq, Nigeria, and Syria. According to State, USAID, and DOD officials, interagency working groups help agencies to reduce the potential for overlap and duplication of effort. Examples of interagency groups, by country, are described below.

- Iraq: A “Liberated Areas Working Group” serves as a clearinghouse and information exchange for both mission-level and headquarters-based counterparts to coordinate agencies’ post-ISIS stabilization efforts for Iraq. As another example, the Ambassador or Deputy Chief of Mission at Embassy Baghdad leads a stabilization and humanitarian assistance working group that meets biweekly and includes participation from State, USAID, and DOD.
- Nigeria: In 2015, State established an interagency group, headed by a retired U.S. Ambassador, that aims to ensure the coordination of U.S. government efforts to counter Boko Haram. Additionally, the U.S. mission in Nigeria has working groups that examine various issues, such as U.S. efforts to mitigate conflict in the country and address conflict issues in northeast Nigeria.

³⁸USIP’s tabletop exercises are events in which civilian and military personnel jointly discuss and plan for real-world challenges relating to interorganizational communication and coordination in complex environments.

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- Syria: Given that the U.S. agencies do not have an embassy-based presence in Syria,³⁹ State, USAID, and DOD coordinate their stabilization efforts for Syria through three interagency platforms: the Southern Syria Assistance Platform (SSAP), located in Jordan; the Syria Transition Assistance Response Team (START), located in Turkey; and, according to a State official, START-Forward in northeastern Syria, which reports to START.⁴⁰ START and SSAP personnel noted that the colocation of State and USAID personnel through these platforms has facilitated coordination between the two agencies, including information sharing. Further, a State Office of Inspector General inspection of the U.S. Embassy Ankara, Turkey, described START as a “cohesive unit” that blends State and USAID officials, and as a unique and “innovative model for diplomacy in dangerous environments.”⁴¹ In addition, for northeast Syria, START established four stabilization-related working groups that meet on a regular basis and include civilian and military representation.⁴²

USIP does not participate in these interagency working groups. Rather, USIP reported that it coordinates on a bilateral, multilateral, and as-needed basis with State, USAID, and DOD headquarters personnel as well as with embassy personnel in the countries where USIP conducts work. USIP also reported that it convenes interagency officials through various programs and events, such as tabletop exercises and conferences. For example, in 2016, USIP convened State, USAID, and DOD, along with various nongovernmental and international organizations, to design and implement a tabletop exercise on countering violent extremism in the Lake Chad Basin.

³⁹The U.S. Embassy in Damascus, Syria, suspended its operations in February 2012 because of concerns over staff safety due to escalating violence.

⁴⁰[GAO-17-687SP](#) and GAO, *Syria Humanitarian Assistance: Some Risks of Providing Aid inside Syria Assessed, but U.S. Agencies Could Improve Fraud Oversight*, [GAO-16-629](#) (Washington, D.C.: July 14, 2016). State and USAID deployed a small team of State and USAID civilian personnel, who were collocated with DOD personnel, to northeastern Syria to oversee the delivery of stabilization and humanitarian assistance and to report on political developments.

⁴¹U.S. Department of State, Office of Inspector General, *Inspection of Embassy Ankara, Turkey*, ISP-I-16-24A (Arlington, Va.: September 2016).

⁴²START’s four stabilization-related working groups are Humanitarian and Protection, Explosive Remnants of War and Internal Security, Governance and Essential Services, and Strategic Communications and Diplomatic Engagement.

Interagency Collaboration Staff Positions

State, USAID, and DOD officials reported that they also bridge their organizational cultures through staff positions that are aimed at enhancing interagency collaboration, such as liaison positions and officials who are embedded in other organizations. For example, SSAP and START each have civil-military liaisons, and agency officials said that these positions have helped to facilitate information sharing among State, USAID, and DOD. As another example, DOD officials reported that embedded State and USAID officials at U.S. Africa Command have helped to inform DOD's perspective on stabilization in Nigeria.

USIP reported that to help bridge organizational cultures and enhance cooperation with its agency partners, the institute operates an annual interagency fellows program. Through the program, USIP hosts one fellow each from State and USAID, and two military officers—one Marine lieutenant colonel and one Army lieutenant colonel—to conduct research and work alongside USIP program staff, according to USIP.

Interagency Definitions of Conflict Prevention, Mitigation, and Stabilization

In 2018, State, USAID, and DOD established a common definition of "stabilization." The three agencies have not established common definitions of the terms "conflict prevention" and "conflict mitigation."⁴³ In the SAR, State, USAID, and DOD defined "stabilization" as "a political endeavor involving an integrated civilian-military process to create conditions where locally legitimate authorities and systems can peaceably manage conflict and prevent a resurgence of violence. Transitional in nature, stabilization may include efforts to establish civil security, provide access to dispute resolution, and deliver targeted basic services, and establish a foundation for the return of displaced people and longer term development."⁴⁴ According to USAID's Administrator, the SAR built on lessons learned from Iraq and Syria, among other locations. The SAR states that, despite the U.S. government's significant international experience in conducting stabilization efforts over recent decades, the U.S. government's concept of stabilization was previously ill-defined and poorly institutionalized across government structures. The SAR also notes that the lack of standardization in defining and conducting stabilization led to repeated mistakes, inefficient spending, and poor accountability for results. During the course of our review, agency and

⁴³State and USAID share a common definition for the program area of "conflict mitigation and stabilization" under State's Standardized Program Structure and Definitions foreign assistance system.

⁴⁴DOD plans to incorporate this definition in its update to DOD Directive 3000.05.

USIP officials expressed varying views related to the feasibility of articulating a common definition for “conflict prevention” and “conflict mitigation.” For example, State and USAID officials noted that all of their agencies’ foreign assistance and diplomatic efforts could be considered conflict prevention. USAID also noted that defining the issues or problem sets associated with “conflict prevention” or “conflict mitigation” will depend, in part, on the context in which the relevant government agency engages on those issues. In addition, State’s Bureau of Conflict and Stabilization Operations opined that conflict management and mitigation is an evolving field of practice as well as an area that can encompass a very broad and multifaceted range of efforts, including diplomacy, foreign assistance, sanctions, and mobilization of international actions. Agency and USIP officials did not identify a negative effect associated with the lack of common definitions of the terms “conflict prevention” and “conflict mitigation.”

Nonetheless, according to State and DOD officials, the agencies have started discussing the merits and feasibility of defining “conflict prevention.” For example, in response to our inquiry during a joint meeting of the three agencies with us in March 2018 to discuss the SAR, a senior State official noted that the three agencies were collectively exploring the feasibility of developing a standardized definition and harmonized approach for conflict prevention. In its technical comments to our draft report, State indicated that the agencies have begun to collaborate on the development of a definition for “conflict prevention.” In addition, as part of its planned structural reorganization of its headquarters bureaus, USAID is proposing the establishment of a new Bureau for Conflict Prevention and Stabilization.⁴⁵

Leadership

We previously found that it is important for agencies to identify sources of leadership for the collaborative effort. Agency and USIP officials identified sources of leadership, such as various NSC committees and special leadership positions, that facilitate coordination of the U.S. government’s conflict prevention, mitigation, and stabilization efforts for Iraq, Nigeria,

⁴⁵USAID plans for the new bureau to house the following offices in its current Bureau for Democracy, Conflict, and Humanitarian Assistance: the Offices of Transition Initiatives; Civilian-Military Cooperation; Conflict Management and Mitigation; Program, Policy, and Management; and Countering Violent Extremism. In its technical comments to our draft report, State indicated that USAID’s proposal for this bureau was developed without consultation with State.

and Syria. State and DOD officials reported that the NSC plays a leadership role in providing strategic direction and policy guidance on issues related to conflict prevention, mitigation, and stabilization. State and DOD officials also said that the NSC convenes interagency actors, including State, USAID, and DOD, to discuss high-level issues in these areas.⁴⁶ State reported that the NSC Fragile States and Stabilization Policy Coordination Committee is the broadest conflict-related coordination group.⁴⁷ State also reported that a significant degree of NSC-level coordination on conflict-related issues occurs through country-specific working groups, including the groups for Iraq, Syria, and Nigeria. The NSC-level Atrocities Prevention Board is another interagency mechanism that covers conflict-related issues. It has the primary purpose of coordinating a whole-of-government approach to prevent mass atrocities and genocide. While USIP is not a member of NSC-level groups, USIP reported that it engages with the NSC regarding national security issues on a bilateral basis.

Agency officials also told us that various special diplomatic positions, such as special envoys and designated coordinators, are a source of leadership for the coordination of U.S. efforts to address conflict abroad.⁴⁸ State and USAID officials cited the role of the Special Presidential Envoy for the Global Coalition to Counter ISIS,⁴⁹ who reports to the Secretary of State, as a source of leadership for U.S. stabilization efforts for Iraq and

⁴⁶The NSC did not respond to our requests for documents and interviews, which limits our ability to discuss the extent of interagency collaboration through NSC-level working groups. However, we interviewed State, USAID, DOD, and USIP officials regarding their participation in NSC working groups.

⁴⁷According to a Presidential Memorandum, Policy Coordination Committees are the main day-to-day fora for interagency coordination of national security policies and are intended to provide policy analysis for consideration by the more senior committees of the national security system and ensure timely responses to the President's decisions. White House, *National Security Presidential Memorandum-4 of April 4, 2017: Organization of the National Security Council, the Homeland Security Council, and Subcommittees*, 82 Fed. Reg. 16881 (Apr. 6, 2017).

⁴⁸State's *Foreign Affairs Handbook* defines a special envoy as "one designated for a particular purpose, such as the conduct of special negotiations and attendance at coronations, inaugurations, and other state ceremonies of special importance." U.S. Department of State, *Foreign Affairs Handbook, "Diplomatic Terms,"* 5 FAH-1 Exhibit H-611.

⁴⁹The role of the Special Presidential Envoy for the Global Coalition to Counter ISIS is to lead the Coalition and help coordinate all aspects of U.S. policy related to defeating ISIS.

Syria. State officials also cited the former U.S. Special Envoy for Syria position as a source of leadership for U.S. efforts for Syria.⁵⁰

In 2015, the Assistant Secretary of State for African Affairs at the time appointed a retired Ambassador as Senior Coordinator on Boko Haram for the Lake Chad Basin region (which includes Nigeria), according to a State official. The Senior Coordinator on Boko Haram chairs a weekly interagency working group that includes a wide array of U.S. agency offices, including State, USAID, and DOD elements at both the headquarters and field-levels. According to DOD and State officials, the weekly meetings led by the Senior Coordinator on Boko Haram have helped U.S. agencies deconflict their efforts. According to a USIP report, the Senior Coordinator position has improved the U.S. government's ability to align its efforts at both senior and working levels and has supported broad, interagency information sharing and coordination in the development of a common U.S. strategy to defeat Boko Haram.⁵¹

Agency officials also cited field-level leadership as helpful in coordinating U.S. government efforts for Iraq, Nigeria, and Syria. For example, for Nigeria, a USAID official told us that the Ambassador and the Deputy Chief of Mission at the U.S. embassy have enhanced and led interagency coordination. The Ambassador has provided input to help deconflict U.S. programming related to conflict mitigation and stabilization, according to this USAID official. For Syria, agency officials identified the leadership of START as helpful in coordinating U.S. stabilization efforts for Syria. Agency officials provided various views regarding the sufficiency of leadership mechanisms currently in place for coordinating U.S. stabilization efforts for Syria. While U.S. field-level efforts for Iraq and Nigeria are led by Ambassadors, the U.S. government's ambassadorial position for Syria has been vacant since 2014.⁵² Some officials told us

⁵⁰A U.S. Special Envoy for Syria position was created in 2014. In 2017, the U.S. Special Envoy was "dual-hatted" as the Deputy Assistant Secretary for the Levant, Syria, Israel, and Palestine Affairs in the Bureau of Near Eastern Affairs, according to a State official. The Administration removed the U.S. Special Envoy for Syria title later in 2017 and reinstated it in July 2018 with the appointment of a new Special Envoy for Syria, according to a State official. As of September 2018, the Special Envoy for Syria was also the Deputy Assistant Secretary for Levant Affairs.

⁵¹United States Institute of Peace, *Breaking Boko Haram and Ramping Up Recovery: U.S. Engagement in the Lake Chad Region 2013–2016* (Washington, D.C.: Sept. 14, 2017).

⁵²The last U.S. Ambassador to Syria was recalled from Damascus, Syria, in 2011 and was based in Washington, D.C. until his retirement in 2014.

there was a lack of centralized leadership and decision-making authority for Syria, while others said that the current leadership structures were generally sufficient for the coordination of U.S. government efforts for Syria.

Clarity of Roles and Responsibilities

We previously found that it is important for agencies to define and agree on their respective roles and responsibilities for a collaborative effort. We found that agencies' roles and responsibilities for conducting stabilization efforts for Iraq, Nigeria, and Syria were generally clear, and through the SAR, agencies have taken steps to clarify their stabilization roles and responsibilities at a global level. USAID officials reported that the agency has largely funded and overseen stabilization efforts for Iraq through the UNDP and local implementers.⁵³ In Syria, State and USAID reported that they formed a combined team for implementing stabilization assistance, with support and equipment supplied by the U.S. military. For Nigeria, according to DOD and USAID officials, roles and responsibilities for agencies, including lead and supporting roles, have been defined for the U.S. counter Boko Haram and ISIS-West Africa effort.

Through the 2018 SAR, State, USAID, and DOD recommended the clarification of their respective roles and responsibilities for conducting U.S. stabilization efforts abroad. The SAR recommended State as the overall lead federal agency for U.S. stabilization efforts, USAID as the lead implementing agency for nonsecurity U.S. stabilization assistance, and DOD as a supporting federal agency that provides security and reinforces civilian efforts where appropriate. The SAR noted that clear lines of authority between U.S. agencies would improve effectiveness, reduce duplication and confusion, enable greater accountability, and fully operationalize a whole-of-government approach. In June 2018, the Secretaries of State and Defense and the USAID Administrator approved the SAR, including its recommendations regarding proposed U.S. agency roles and responsibilities for U.S. stabilization efforts.

In addition to the SAR, a 2018 DOD-sponsored study also recommended that DOD play a primarily supporting role in non-military, U.S. stabilization

⁵³According to State's Bureau for Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor, it also funds a significant portion of stabilization efforts for Iraq, which are implemented through local and international nongovernmental organizations.

efforts.⁵⁴ According to a DOD official, DOD is in the process of updating its stabilization policy to reflect DOD's supporting role in U.S. government stabilization efforts, in accordance with the SAR. As indicated above, U.S. agencies do not distinguish their coordination of prevention and mitigation efforts as discrete areas of work; as a result, we were unable to assess specific roles and responsibilities among U.S. agencies for these areas.

According to USIP, it aims to complement U.S. executive branch efforts and partner with U.S. agencies to prevent and resolve conflict in areas of interest to U.S. security. USIP reported that it convenes U.S. government and non-U.S. government entities on a variety of high-level policy issues; conducts its own research and programs; and partners with U.S. agencies to conduct research and programs abroad. State, DOD, and USAID officials said that USIP plays a valuable, unique, and helpful role given its status as an independent organization, its specialized expertise, its ability to convene interagency actors in a non-official setting, and its ability to build local relationships through a continuous, field-based presence in certain countries.⁵⁵ For example, State officials and nongovernmental partners of USIP in Nigeria told us that USIP played a beneficial role in convening national and local Nigerian leaders for peace and reconciliation dialogues.

Participants

We previously found that it is important to ensure that the relevant participants have been included in the collaborative effort. U.S. government entities conducting conflict prevention, mitigation, and stabilization efforts abroad have demonstrated the key collaboration practice of ensuring the inclusion of all relevant participants. State, USAID, DOD, and other agency officials identified State, USAID, and DOD as the primary U.S. government agencies that participate in mechanisms to coordinate U.S. conflict prevention, mitigation, and

⁵⁴Linda Robinson, Sean Mann, Jeffrey Martini, and Stephanie Pezard, *Finding the Right Balance: Department of Defense Roles in Stabilization* (Santa Monica, Calif.: RAND Corporation, 2018). We did not assess the methodology used by RAND for this report.

⁵⁵USIP reported that its independent status has been vital to its ability to convene and facilitate dialogue with locals in conflict zones; conduct research, analysis, and fieldwork outside U.S. government security perimeters to reduce violence in conflict zones; host high-level policy reviews; and work continuously and over a long period of time in conflict-affected areas.

stabilization efforts abroad.⁵⁶ Agency officials conducting such efforts for Iraq, Syria, and Nigeria reported that the relevant participants—State, USAID, and DOD—are involved in the coordination of such efforts.⁵⁷

USIP also reported that it participates in U.S. conflict prevention, mitigation, and stabilization efforts through a variety of means. At the headquarters-level, USIP officials told us that they conduct both regular and as-needed consultations and discussions with senior agency officials at the NSC, State, USAID, DOD, and other agencies. USIP and State officials also indicated that they coordinate their Iraq, Nigeria, and Syria programs that are funded by State through interagency agreements. USIP officials said that it is in communication with the embassies where USIP has a USIP office or ground presence. For Iraq, State and USIP officials located in-country said that they contact one another as needed. According to USIP, in March 2018, it reestablished an American country manager position in Baghdad, Iraq, whose responsibilities include regular communication and coordination with relevant U.S. government officials. For Nigeria, USAID and USIP officials said that USIP participates in a peace and security network that brings together international nongovernmental organizations and governmental actors—including USAID—to share information on peace and security efforts being conducted in Nigeria.

Written Guidance and Agreements

We previously found that agencies that articulate their agreements in formal documents can strengthen their commitment to working collaboratively. We found that U.S. agencies and USIP have documented some aspects of how they coordinate their conflict prevention, mitigation, and stabilization efforts in Iraq, Nigeria, and Syria. However, State, USAID, and DOD have not documented their agreement from the SAR on how they will coordinate their global stabilization efforts in conflict-affected areas, such as their agreements on common outcomes and accountability and their roles and responsibilities for conducting U.S. stabilization efforts.

⁵⁶In addition to State, USAID, and DOD, we also spoke with officials from the Departments of Justice and Homeland Security, and they acknowledged that State, USAID, and DOD are the primary U.S. agencies that participate in mechanisms to coordinate U.S. conflict prevention, mitigation, and stabilization efforts abroad.

⁵⁷Other U.S. government entities, such as the Departments of Justice and the Treasury, as well as members of the intelligence community, contribute specific and supporting capabilities to U.S. efforts to address conflict abroad.

Specifically, we found that U.S. agencies and USIP have documented some aspects of how they coordinate their conflict prevention, mitigation, and stabilization efforts in Iraq, Nigeria, and Syria. Notably, USIP provided us with examples of its written agreements with U.S. agencies for which USIP implements conflict prevention and mitigation programming with agency funding. USIP has written agreements with USAID and various State bureaus for programs implemented in Iraq, Nigeria, and Syria. According to USIP officials in Nigeria, USIP and State coordinated the planning and implementation of their efforts during the course of these interagency agreements.

In June 2018, State publically announced that the Secretaries of State and Defense and the USAID Administrator approved the SAR's recommendations regarding U.S. stabilization efforts, such as the SAR's recommendations to establish outcomes and accountability mechanisms and to formally define agencies' stabilization roles and responsibilities. According to the SAR, while the principles for effective stabilization, such as clarified and formally defined roles and responsibilities, have been widely studied, they have not been systematically applied and institutionalized. According to key practices for enhancing interagency collaboration, articulating agreements in formal documents can strengthen collaborative efforts, and reduce the potential for fragmentation, overlap, and duplication. However, the SAR remains a "framework" that, according to State, has yet to be translated into agency policy and practice, and State, USAID, and DOD have not yet developed a plan to implement the SAR recommendations.

State, USAID, and DOD officials acknowledged the importance of codifying their agreement on the collaboration elements raised in the SAR but said that they had not yet decided on a specific document or documents for doing so. For example, officials discussed the idea of establishing an interagency memorandum among the three agencies to codify their specific roles and responsibilities for conducting stabilization efforts, but they indicated that next steps will depend on various factors, such as decisions with regard to State's and USAID's ongoing organizational redesign processes.⁵⁸ Agency officials also indicated that

⁵⁸The U.S. government has codified U.S. agency roles and responsibilities for U.S. stabilization assistance in the past. For example, in 2005, the President issued National Security Presidential Directive 44, which established an overall, government-wide policy for U.S. stabilization and reconstruction efforts abroad, and assigned responsibility for leading and coordinating such efforts to the Secretary of State. However, according to State, USAID, and DOD officials, this directive is outdated and no longer valid.

they are considering implementing the SAR's recommendations through issuing written, internal guidance within each agency. We have previously found that written guidance, such as an implementation plan or memorandum of agreements, can help agencies during times of transition when leadership changes and there is a need for continuity.⁵⁹ By formally documenting agreements according to key leading practices, the agencies will be better positioned to strengthen their collaborative efforts, and reduce any potential for fragmentation, overlap, and duplication.

Conclusions

In the National Security Strategy issued in December 2017, the United States emphasized the need to integrate all instruments of the United States' national power in order to deter conflict and secure peace. State, USAID, DOD, and USIP work individually and jointly to prevent and mitigate conflict and stabilize conflict-affected areas. Although the three agencies have incorporated aspects of key practices in the coordination of their conflict prevention, mitigation, and stabilization efforts in Iraq, Nigeria, and Syria, they have not fully demonstrated the key practice of documenting agreements in written guidance. By articulating their agreement in formal documents, such as a memorandum of agreement or an implementation plan, these agencies can strengthen their coordination of U.S. stabilization efforts.

Recommendations for Executive Action

We are making a total of three recommendations, one each to State, USAID, and DOD. Specifically:

- The Secretary of State, in collaboration with the Administrator of the U.S. Agency for International Development and the Secretary of Defense, should document their agreement on coordination for U.S. stabilization efforts through formal written guidance and agreements that address key collaboration practices such as defining outcomes and accountability and clarifying roles and responsibilities for U.S. stabilization efforts. (Recommendation 1)
- The Administrator of the U.S. Agency for International Development, in collaboration with the Secretaries of Defense and State, should document their agreement on coordination for U.S. stabilization efforts through formal written guidance and agreements that address key

⁵⁹[GAO-06-15](#), [GAO-12-1022](#).

collaboration practices such as defining outcomes and clarifying roles and responsibilities for U.S. stabilization efforts. (Recommendation 2)

- The Secretary of Defense, in collaboration with the Administrator of the U.S. Agency for International Development and the Secretary of State, should document their agreement on coordination for U.S. stabilization efforts through formal written guidance and agreements that address key collaboration practices such as defining outcomes and accountability and clarifying roles and responsibilities for U.S. stabilization efforts. (Recommendation 3)

Agency and USIP Comments

We provided a draft of this report to State, USAID, and DOD for comment. State, USAID, and DOD concurred with the recommendations and provided comments, which are reproduced in appendixes VI through VIII, respectively. State, USAID, and DOD also provided technical comments, which we incorporated as appropriate.

We also provided a draft of this report to USIP for comment. USIP's comments are reproduced in appendix IX. USIP also provided technical comments, which we incorporated as appropriate.

We are sending copies of this report to the appropriate congressional committees, the Secretary of State, the Administrator of USAID, the Secretary of Defense, the President of USIP, and other interested parties. In addition, the report is available at no charge on the GAO website at <http://www.gao.gov>.

If you or your staff have any questions about this report, please contact me at (202) 512-7114 or FarbJ@gao.gov. Contact points for our Offices of Congressional Relations and Public Affairs may be found on the last

page of this report. GAO staff who made key contributions to this report are listed in appendix X.

Sincerely yours,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Jessica Farb". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Jessica Farb, Director
International Affairs and Trade

Appendix I: Objectives, Scope, and Methodology

This report (1) describes examples of conflict prevention, mitigation, and stabilization efforts that U.S. agencies and the U.S. Institute of Peace (USIP) conducted in Iraq, Nigeria, and Syria and their goals in fiscal year 2017 and (2) examines the extent to which U.S. agencies and USIP incorporated key collaboration practices to coordinate their efforts.

To address both objectives, we reviewed the conflict prevention, mitigation, and stabilization efforts of the Departments of State (State) and Defense (DOD), the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID), and USIP.¹ We reviewed program, coordination, strategy, and planning documentation and interviewed State, USAID, DOD, and USIP officials at headquarters and in the field with regard to specific efforts in Iraq, Nigeria, and Syria. We conducted work in Washington, D.C.; Iraq; Nigeria; and Jordan and held teleconferences with officials in Syria, Turkey, and Kuwait.² At the posts, we interviewed U.S. embassy leadership, agency program officers, and implementing partners, where available. We focused on Iraq, Nigeria, and Syria based on several criteria, including U.S. national security interests, countries with ongoing conflict, countries where all three agencies and USIP initially reported that they conducted relevant efforts in fiscal year 2017, prior GAO reporting, and input from agencies and USIP.³ We cannot generalize our findings from these three countries to the other countries where these agencies have conflict prevention, mitigation, and stabilization efforts.

Specifically, we interviewed officials at the following entities.

- State officials in the Bureau of African Affairs; Bureau of Conflict and Stabilization Operations; Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and

¹Although not included in our review, agencies such as the Departments of Homeland Security, Justice, and the Treasury have also supported U.S. conflict prevention, mitigation, and stabilization efforts abroad. For example, the Departments of Homeland Security and Justice have conducted efforts to develop foreign counterparts' justice and security capabilities. The United States also funds efforts abroad through international organizations such as the United Nations. We confirmed with officials from the Departments of Homeland Security and Justice that State, USAID, and DOD are the primary U.S. agencies that participate in mechanisms to coordinate U.S. conflict prevention, mitigation, and stabilization efforts abroad.

²U.S. coordination of assistance to Syria, at the field-level, is conducted from U.S. missions in countries in the region, including Jordan, Turkey, and Kuwait. The United States does not have an embassy in Syria.

³Although DOD initially reported that it conducted an effort in Nigeria in fiscal year 2017, DOD later clarified that the effort reported for Nigeria was in the planning stage.

Labor; Bureau of International Narcotics and Law Enforcement; Bureau of Near Eastern Affairs; Bureau of Political-Military Affairs; Bureau of Public Affairs; Office of the Inspector General; Office of the Special Presidential Envoy for the Global Coalition to Defeat ISIS (the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria);⁴ and the Office of U.S. Foreign Assistance Resources;

- USAID officials in the Bureau for Africa; Bureau for Democracy, Conflict, and Humanitarian Assistance; and Bureau for the Middle East;
- DOD officials in the Office of the Secretary of Defense, Office of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, U.S. Africa Command, and U.S. Central Command; and
- USIP officials in the Middle East and Africa Center and the Policy, Learning, and Strategy Center.

To describe examples of conflict prevention, mitigation, and stabilization efforts that U.S. agencies and USIP conducted in Iraq, Nigeria, and Syria and their goals in fiscal year 2017, we collected, synthesized, and summarized information from State, USAID, DOD, and USIP.

First, we obtained the definitions of conflict prevention, mitigation, and stabilization from each entity to the extent each entity used and defined these terms. Based on our discussions with each agency and USIP, we determined that we could not use one common definition, as each agency and USIP defined these terms based on its programs and the context of its operations; thus, we would have had to use overlapping terms and definitions to capture their efforts for fiscal year 2017.

- State and USAID used the term “conflict mitigation and stabilization” and defined their efforts as foreign assistance programs that reduce the threat or impact of violent conflict and promote the peaceful resolution of differences, mitigate violence if it has already broken out,

⁴This office was previously referred to as the Office of the Special Presidential Envoy for the Global Coalition to Counter ISIS.

establish a framework for peace and reconciliation, and provide for the transition from conflict to post-conflict environments.⁵

- DOD used the term “stabilization” and defined it as “an integrated civilian and military process applied in designated fragile and conflict affected areas outside the United States to establish civil security, address drivers of instability, and create conditions for sustainable stability—a condition characterized by local political systems that can peaceably manage conflict and change; effective and accountable institutions that can provide essential services; and societies that respect fundamental human rights and the rule of law.”⁶
- USIP generally referred to its work as conflict prevention and resolution, which may include conflict prevention, mitigation, and stabilization efforts. USIP did not have current definitions for these terms in fiscal year 2017. USIP officials stated that all of USIP’s efforts would fit under the general umbrella of conflict prevention, mitigation, and stabilization and reported all of USIP’s efforts abroad for Iraq, Nigeria, and Syria (and in neighboring countries for Syria) that were active in fiscal year 2017.

Second, to collect the data describing the efforts and their goals from each agency and USIP, we developed a standardized data collection instrument. We defined “efforts” as any program, initiative, or other similar

⁵State and USAID reported efforts meeting their definition in State’s Standardized Program Structure and Definitions for “Program Area PS.6: Conflict Mitigation and Stabilization”; they also reported other efforts that equally meet that definition although such efforts may be currently categorized under another program area for budgeting purposes, such as Countering Violent Extremism. State and USAID use the Standardized Program Structure and Definitions system to categorize foreign assistance efforts. State, in concert with USAID, performed a major update to the system in 2016.

⁶DOD reported efforts using what officials referred to as a working definition of stabilization for fiscal year 2017, noting that any conflict prevention or mitigation efforts conducted by DOD would be included within this category of efforts. According to Office of the Undersecretary of Defense for Policy officials, this definition was meant to bridge the existing but outdated 2009 definition of “stability operations” in DOD Instruction 3000.05 with the interagency definition for “stabilization” being developed as part of the 2017–2018 Stabilization Assistance Review. DOD Instruction 3000.05, dated September 16, 2009, defined “stability operations” as “an overarching term encompassing various military missions, tasks, and activities conducted outside the United States in coordination with other instruments of national power to maintain or reestablish a safe and secure environment, provide essential government services, emergency infrastructure reconstruction, and humanitarian relief.” According to DOD officials, use of this definition would have resulted in a greater number of DOD efforts, but those efforts were no longer considered “stabilization” efforts by the Office of the Undersecretary of Defense for Policy in fiscal year 2017.

level of engagement and also accepted projects and activities when reported.⁷ We had each agency and USIP use its own terms, definitions, and categorizations of efforts in this instrument. Based on our discussions with the agencies and USIP, we determined that this would still allow us to collect a comprehensive set of programs from each entity and to learn about their key efforts in this domain. However, we recognize that some entities might have included programs that other entities would not have included, even though both entities' programs may have had many similarities, because of the entities' differing definitions and terms. To ensure that our report could be made publically available, we also accepted reported categories of programs if listing each program separately would have meant including controlled unclassified information (sensitive but unclassified) .

Within the data collection instrument, we asked agencies to report efforts by country, specifically, for Iraq, Nigeria, and Syria. To corroborate entries in the instrument, we requested that the agencies and USIP also provide one document or website link supporting each entry. Not all agencies fully complied with this request. In some cases, we conducted web searches for any publicly available supporting information.

Third, we reviewed the reported data and supporting documents and obtained clarification from agency officials where needed. We synthesized and summarized information for each effort in this report's appendixes and, at a higher level, in the body of the report. We requested technical comments on our summarized information from the agencies and USIP, and incorporated their suggestions as appropriate. We did not independently verify whether the reported lists of conflict prevention, mitigation, and stabilization efforts included all such efforts in Iraq, Nigeria, and Syria (and in neighboring countries for Syria).

To examine the extent to which U.S. agencies and USIP incorporated key collaboration practices to coordinate their conflict prevention, mitigation, and stabilization efforts, we analyzed information about State, USAID, DOD, and USIP's coordination using six of the seven key practices for implementing interagency collaborative mechanisms that we have

⁷We did not include broader agency efforts, such as diplomatic and defense activities, which were not reported in the data collection instrument.

previously identified and that were applicable to our review.⁸ We assessed coordination of agency and USIP efforts for conflict prevention, mitigation, and stabilization as a whole because, as indicated above, the agencies did not always distinguish their coordination efforts to address conflict using the same terms or categorization of efforts. Where information was available, we assessed whether the agencies and USIP had generally incorporated or not incorporated the six selected key practices to coordinate their efforts between State, USAID, DOD, and USIP at the headquarters level and for our selected countries of Iraq, Nigeria, and Syria. To make this determination, we examined agency and USIP documents and conducted interviews about interagency collaboration activities with officials from State, USAID, DOD, and USIP. We reviewed agency reports; jointly developed and independently developed strategies; interagency agreements; monitoring reports; and public statements by senior U.S. government officials, among other documents. We also reviewed agency and third-party reports that assessed interagency collaboration, among other issues, though it was beyond the scope of this review to assess the methodology or underlying data in these reports. During the course of our work, State, USAID, and DOD released the 2018 *Stabilization Assistance Review: A Framework for Maximizing the Effectiveness of U.S. Government Efforts to Stabilize Conflict-Affected Areas*. This report assessed U.S. stabilization assistance globally in conflict-affected areas. We reviewed the contents of the report and interviewed agency officials associated with this review to better understand their findings as may be related to the key collaboration practices applicable to our review.

Although the National Security Council (NSC) is responsible for coordination of security-related activities and functions of the executive departments and agencies, the NSC did not respond to our request for documents and interviews. We mitigated this limitation by interviewing officials at the three agencies and reviewing other available documentation including the U.S. Strategy for Countering Boko Haram/ISIS-West Africa and the U.S. Strategy to Counter the Islamic

⁸GAO, *Managing for Results: Key Considerations for Implementing Interagency Collaborative Mechanisms*, [GAO-12-1022](#) (Washington, D.C.: Sept. 27, 2012). We assessed the key practices of outcomes and accountability, bridging organizational cultures, leadership, clarity of roles and responsibilities, participants, and written guidance and agreements. We did not include the key practice of resources in the scope of this review. We could not fully assess the extent that U.S. agencies have followed the key practice of defining outcomes and accountability because we were not granted access to key documents and information necessary to fully assess agency's efforts for this area.

State of Iraq and the Levant. During our visit to the U.S. embassy in Nigeria, we observed meetings for two interagency working groups. We also interviewed implementing partners for U.S. government and USIP efforts in Iraq, Jordan, and Nigeria. We used our analysis of agency and USIP documents and the results of our interviews with officials to assess collaboration practices among State, USAID, DOD, and USIP. To aid in our analysis of coordination from our review of documents and interviews, we used the information obtained under the first objective and compared State, DOD, USAID, and USIP descriptions of each of their efforts in Iraq, Nigeria, and Syria to assess for any unnecessary duplication.⁹ As discussed above, some entities may have included efforts that other entities would not have included based on their definitions for the terms in our scope. As a result, our analysis only includes the list of programs provided by the agencies to assess for duplication.

We conducted this performance audit from April 2017 to September 2018 in accordance with generally accepted government auditing standards. Those standards require that we plan and perform the audit to obtain sufficient, appropriate evidence to provide a reasonable basis for our findings and conclusions based on our audit objectives. We believe that the evidence obtained provides a reasonable basis for our findings and conclusions based on our audit objectives.

⁹GAO defines duplication as occurring when two or more agencies or programs are engaged in the same activities or provide the same services to the same beneficiaries. See GAO, *Fragmentation, Overlap, and Duplication: An Evaluation and Management Guide*, [GAO-15-49SP](#) (Washington, D.C.: April 2015).

Appendix II: State Reported Conflict Mitigation and Stabilization Efforts for Iraq, Nigeria, and Syria, Fiscal Year 2017

Conflict mitigation and stabilization effort	State's description of effort and its goals
IRAQ	
Anti-Terrorism Assistance Program (ATA)	<p>The Department of State's (State) ATA Program is managed by the Bureau of Counterterrorism and implemented by the Bureau of Diplomatic Security. The ATA program trains and equips selected Iraqi law enforcement agencies to counter improvised explosive devices, respond to critical incidents, and conduct terrorism related investigations. ATA funds support training courses, consultations, associated equipment deliveries, and training support costs in Iraq and other selected third-country training locations. ATA provides the antiterrorism training and equipment to help Iraqi law enforcement agencies deal effectively with security challenges within their borders, to defend against threats to national and regional stability, and to deter terrorist operations across borders and regions. ATA assists efforts to defeat the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS)^a and counter transnational terror groups and organizations by curtailing the transit of foreign terrorist fighters throughout the country and mitigating the effects of terrorist incidents.</p>
DRL Good Governance Programs ^b	<p>State's Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor (DRL) conducts Good Governance Programs in Iraq through grants to implementing partners. These programs aim to advance the equitable representation of religious and ethnic minority groups and internally displaced persons (IDP), women, and other populations marginalized in governance structures. The programs are also intended to promote equitable access to resources and services and support reform efforts on key issues of human rights and democratic governance. Programming engages civil society to develop and implement key democratic reform processes and institutions in both the central government and the Kurdistan Regional Government. The goals of Good Governance Programs in Iraq are to strengthen citizen-responsive governance, security, and rule of law to prevent instability, violence, or other crises through collaboration with Iraqi partner institutions on activities that combat corruption and strengthen governance.</p>
DRL Political Competition and Consensus Building Programs ^b	<p>State's DRL conducts Political Competition and Consensus Building Programs in Iraq through grants to implementing partners. Capitalizing on political openings created through national and provincial elections, these programs intend to work with newly elected officials and parties to strengthen their ability to equitably represent the needs of their constituents, with a particular focus on outreach to minorities and marginalized populations. One publicly competed grant will support avenues for citizens to negotiate disputes and debate policy priorities through peaceful, democratic methods, and will work to ease tensions between the central government and the Kurdistan Regional Government. The overall goal of these programs is to build the capacity of the government of Iraq to take the lead in strengthening citizen-responsive governance, security, and rule of law to prevent further instability and violence. DRL programming intends to help the government of Iraq become more inclusive, transparent, and responsive with increased participation by women, youth, and religious and ethnic minorities.</p>

**Appendix II: State Reported Conflict Mitigation
and Stabilization Efforts for Iraq, Nigeria, and
Syria, Fiscal Year 2017**

Conflict mitigation and stabilization effort	State's description of effort and its goals
DRL Rule of Law Programs ^b	<p>State's DRL conducts Rule of Law Programs in Iraq through grants to implementing partners. These programs are intended to promote reconciliation initiatives, including efforts to counter violent extremism; reintegrate returning IDPs, survivors, and their families; rehabilitate men and boys affected by the conflict; reconstitute and protect minority communities—in support of the global religious minorities earmark; and support civil society to promote accountability and transparency. More specifically, these efforts aim to (1) strengthen civil society's ability to monitor the status of detainees and advocate for fair treatment, anti-torture, and due process; promote protection of basic human rights and democratic principles; and provide psychosocial support for trauma survivors; (2) increase accountability for human rights violations, including those associated with the current crisis, with a particular focus on the most vulnerable Iraqis, including religious and ethnic minorities, and women and children; and (3) support efforts to advocate for the rights and protections of women, girls, IDPs, victims of war—including Marla Ruzicka Iraqi War Victims Fund beneficiaries—and other marginalized groups.</p>
DRL Social and Economic Services and Protections for Vulnerable Populations Programs ^b	<p>State's DRL conducts Social and Economic Services and Protections for Vulnerable Populations Programs in Iraq through grants to implementing partners. Programs may include livelihood and vocational training; small and medium enterprise creation and support; psychosocial and legal aid services; compensation for war victims/reparations; and other efforts to support the rehabilitation of victims of conflict that are not reached through current assistance. These programs aim to address the post-conflict vulnerabilities of disproportionately affected marginalized populations that are often targeted by transnational terror groups and organizations to spread radicalization. The particular emphasis is on widows, single female-headed households, vulnerable youth, religious minorities in support of the global earmark, and victims of torture and war—including Marla Ruzicka Iraqi War Victims beneficiaries.</p>
Explosive Remnants of War Clearance	<p>State's Bureau of Political and Military Affairs supports Explosive Remnants of War (ERW) Clearance efforts in response to recent activities of ISIS in Iraq that have dramatically altered the Conventional Weapons Destruction landscape. ISIS used mass-produced, technologically advanced improvised explosive devices (IED) to defend captured territory and target Iraqi Security Forces, as well as to booby trap homes, public spaces, farm land, and infrastructure to discourage the return of IDPs. As IDPs return to their communities, these devices continue to perpetuate ISIS's reign of terror by indiscriminately killing civilians and impeding stabilization operations. This program, which State conducts through implementing partners, supports the urgent survey and clearance of explosive hazards from critical infrastructure associated with the delivery of clean water, electricity, healthcare, education, and transportation, as well as other sites in areas of Iraq liberated from ISIS to facilitate follow-on stabilization projects, the restoration of basic community services, and the return of IDPs. This program also supports the survey and clearance of ERW in areas impacted by legacy contamination in Iraq's North and South. The overall goal is to assist efforts to defeat ISIS and help the government of Iraq support the safe return of Iraqis that were displaced from their homes by ISIS or liberation campaigns.</p>

**Appendix II: State Reported Conflict Mitigation
and Stabilization Efforts for Iraq, Nigeria, and
Syria, Fiscal Year 2017**

Conflict mitigation and stabilization effort	State's description of effort and its goals
Mine Risk Education	State's Bureau of Political and Military Affairs conducts the Mine Risk Education and Victims' Assistance programs in Iraq through grants to implementing partners. The risk education program teaches men, women, and children across Iraq about the dangers posed by explosive hazards. This program focuses on IDPs who will be returning to areas liberated from ISIS as well as communities who have already returned to liberated areas. The program also provides risk education to people in North and South Iraq who live and work near legacy ERW contamination. The goal of this program is to strengthen citizen-responsive governance and security to prevent further instability and violence as well as to bolster human security.
NIGERIA	
Advance Human Rights Training for Law Enforcement Officers	State's Bureau of International Narcotics and Law Enforcement, Office of Africa and Middle East Programs, is responsible for the Advance Human rights Training for Law Enforcement Officers effort. It provides advanced human rights training to Nigerian Police Force officers deploying to the northeast and to trainers from the force's academies and colleges (a train-the-trainer focus). The goal of the effort is to increase the Nigerian Police Force's capacity to better prevent, detect, respond to, and investigate crime while protecting the rights of all citizens.
Arewa 24—Hausa Language Media Platform	State's Bureau of African Affairs, Office of Security Affairs, was responsible for supporting Arewa 24—Hausa Language Media Platform. Arewa 24 is a free-to-air satellite TV channel and trans-media platform based in Kano, Nigeria. Positive narratives intended to help counter violent extremism were inserted into general entertainment programming aimed at young Hausa speakers in Northern Nigeria. Arewa 24 contributed to a sustainable ecosystem of indigenous capacity to create, develop, produce, and disseminate countering violent extremism (CVE) programming. State supported this effort through grants to an implementing partner. State's Bureau of Counterterrorism also managed separate awards in support of this program. This effort was a Trans-Sahara Counterterrorism Partnership (TSCTP) ^c project, and the U.S. Embassy Abuja Public Affairs Section also supported it. The goals of the effort were to (1) sustain broadcast quality of credible, effective, and entertaining CVE television programming; (2) increase the capacity of media professionals in Northern Nigeria to produce CVE programming; (3) expand the reach of Arewa 24's messaging in Nigeria through agreements and arrangements with other distribution channels; and (4) continue to build commercially derived revenue, paving the way to sustainability. Although all U.S. funding for this program ended on September 30, 2017, Arewa 24 remains on the air through support from private Nigerian investors.
Community Engagement of Federal Security Agents in Peace and Trustbuilding	State's Public Affairs Section at the U.S. Embassy Abuja conducts the Community Engagement of Federal Security Agents in Peace and Trustbuilding effort through a grant to an implementing partner. This project is intended to promote confidence-building measures between youth and government of Nigeria law enforcement and security personnel in Kaduna state. The goal is to improve cooperation between local residents and the government's law and security forces essential to deterring and capturing members of violent extremist organizations.

Appendix II: State Reported Conflict Mitigation and Stabilization Efforts for Iraq, Nigeria, and Syria, Fiscal Year 2017

Conflict mitigation and stabilization effort	State's description of effort and its goals
CVE Messaging Center—White Dove (Farar Tattabara)	State's Bureau of African Affairs, Office of Public Diplomacy and Public Affairs, conducts this effort through a cooperative agreement and grant to an implementing partner. This effort supports the establishment of a messaging center to produce three original radio programs in the Hausa language broadcast weekly over 22 stations across 19 states of northern Nigeria. The program also includes a social media component. The three radio programs deal with themes of de-radicalization, rehabilitation, and reintegration. The primary goal is to produce and disseminate counter-violent extremism organization messaging to mitigate efficacy of such organizations' propaganda and recruitment efforts.
Ending Labor Exploitation of Almajiri Children and De-Escalating Insecurity: An Advocacy Project for Peace and Security in Kano State	State's Bureau of African Affairs, Office of Security Affairs, conducted the Ending Labor Exploitation of Almajiri Children and De-Escalating Insecurity project through a grant to an implementing partner. The project aimed to reduce vulnerabilities associated with the Almajiri education system by (1) enhancing public awareness of the threat presented to community security by the present state of degeneration of the system of Almajiri education; (2) mobilizing the voices of key community stakeholders, including teachers, parents, religious scholars and institutions; and (3) supporting the government to put in place adequate laws and policies to reform the system and combat exploitation of the Almajiri in the state of Kano. This effort was a TSCTP project, and the U.S. Embassy Abuja Public Affairs Section also supported it. The project's goal was to contribute to ending the systemic labor exploitation and abuse of Almajiri children prevalent in the Almajiranci system of education, and to reduce the risk of violence and insecurity in Kano state in Northern Nigeria. This project ended on January 30, 2018
Equipment Procurements for Police in Northeast Nigeria	State's Bureau of International Narcotics and Law Enforcement, Office of Africa and Middle East Programs, is responsible for the Equipment Procurements for Police in Northeast Nigeria effort. This program equips police commands, stations, and officers in northeast Nigeria. The equipment includes military-grade tents, ponchos, poncho stuff sacks, cots, flashlights, flashlight holsters, individual first aid kits, and portable emergency lighting for 1,500 officers. The goal of this effort is to increase the Nigerian Police Force's capacity to provide security in the Northeast and to lay the foundation for the safe and voluntary return of displaced persons when conditions are conducive.
Global Center on Cooperative Security, Promoting Resilient Communities in Nigeria and Kenya	State's DRL, Office of Global Programming, is responsible for the Global Center on Cooperative Security, Promoting Resilient Communities in Nigeria and Kenya effort. The U.S. Embassy Abuja Political Section also supports this effort. This 2-year program is designed to support existing networks of young civil society leaders; forge new partnerships among local civil society organizations, young people, and government stakeholders; facilitate collaborative learning activities; and organize small grant assistance and in-kind support to local civil society organizations working to prevent violent extremism. The goal of the effort is to mitigate threats of violent extremism in Nigeria and Kenya by promoting community resilience and empowering youth leaders to recognize and prevent violence committed by groups such as Boko Haram and Al Shabaab.

Appendix II: State Reported Conflict Mitigation and Stabilization Efforts for Iraq, Nigeria, and Syria, Fiscal Year 2017

Conflict mitigation and stabilization effort	State's description of effort and its goals
Healing, Reconciliation, and Counter-Radicalization in Adamawa, Borno, and Yobe State	State's Bureau of African Affairs, Office of Security Affairs, conducted the Healing, Reconciliation, and Counter-Radicalization in Adamawa, Borno, and Yobe State project through a grant to an implementing partner. Project activities were designed to help resolve tensions between individuals returning to local communities and those who remained throughout periods of instability and to reduce prejudice and stigmatization of those captured by Boko Haram (especially women who were raped and impregnated, forced into marriage, and/or kept as sex slaves). Community resilience groups were also created to promote community cohesion through the use of strategic communications and counter narratives. This effort was a TSCTP project, and the U.S. Embassy Abuja Public Affairs Section also supported it. This project ended on May 31, 2018.
International Law Enforcement Academy Program (ILEA)—Countering Violent Extremism Series	State's Bureau of International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs, Office of Anti-Crime Programs, is responsible for the International Law Enforcement Academy Program (ILEA)—Countering Violent Extremism Series. Nigeria is one of the member countries of ILEA Gaborone, ILEA Roswell, and the West Africa Regional Training Center in Accra. In fiscal year 2017, Nigerian law enforcement and criminal justice system personnel participated in a specialized Countering Violent Extremism (CVE) course series, which included anticorruption, community policing, combatting CVE in prisons, threat finance, post-blast investigations, and law enforcement techniques to combat terrorism. The ILEA program generates course schedules annually based on feedback from participant countries, like Nigeria, as well as U.S. federal law enforcement, and State functional and geographic bureaus. The program is also a cooperative effort that involves the expertise of trainers and agents from federal, state, municipal, and foreign law enforcement agencies. The ILEA program pursues three core objectives: building the capacity of foreign criminal justice partners of the United States to stop crime before it comes to the United States, fostering partnerships across national borders within important regions of the world, and advancing partner nations' engagement with U.S. law enforcement agencies. The ILEA program is an important part of the interagency U.S. effort to combat transnational criminal organizations and combat violent extremism, which facilitates stability in individual countries and regions, including Nigeria.
Justice and Security Dialogues Project—U.S. Institute of Peace	State's Bureau of International Narcotics and Law Enforcement, Office of Africa and Middle East Programs, awarded funds to the U.S. Institute of Peace to conduct the Justice and Security Dialogues project. Under this effort, citizens and authorities work to jointly address important security challenges within select communities of the Sahel and Maghreb, including in Nigeria. Participants share knowledge and skills and support each other across the broader region. The project is targeting a community population of 430,000 in the north local government of Jos in Plateau state. The goal of the effort is to improve the relationship between security providers and citizens and to support civilian security forces to be more effective, accountable, and responsive to community needs.

**Appendix II: State Reported Conflict Mitigation
and Stabilization Efforts for Iraq, Nigeria, and
Syria, Fiscal Year 2017**

Conflict mitigation and stabilization effort	State's description of effort and its goals
Northern Governors Dialogue	State's Bureau of Conflict and Stabilization Operations, Office of Africa Operations, awarded funds to the U.S. Institute of Peace to conduct the Northern Governors Dialogue. This effort supports governors of northern states, relevant federal government officials, and representative civil society leaders in addressing conflict drivers and stabilization-related challenges. The program is intended to strengthen their collective understanding of relevant issues and their capacity to develop sustainable and inclusive policies. The goal is to have an invested group of northern governors and a Senior Working Group of civil society leaders that have (1) identified a set of citizen-informed priority policy areas for northern Nigeria to prevent and resolve violent conflict, as well as to enhance stabilization efforts where appropriate, and (2) demonstrated a continued willingness to engage together on specific conflict-related issues.
Open Minds Project	State's Public Affairs Section at the U.S. Embassy Abuja, conducts the Open Minds Project through a grant to an implementing partner. This project intends to train and mentor 80 primary and secondary school students from Plateau state and Federal Capital Territory in critical thinking skills in support of CVE efforts. The goal is to better enable participants to resist messaging and recruitment efforts of violent extremist organizations
Search for Common Ground, Early Warning/Early Response	State's Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor, Office of Global Programming, is responsible for the Search for Common Ground, Early Warning/Early Response effort. This program establishes community-based early warning and early response systems and strengthens the capacity of state and local actors to secure communities. The intent is to enhance community and state actors' ability to protect citizens from imminent threats from Boko Haram. Overall goals of the program are to increase capacity of target communities to identify and analyze early warning signs of violence; to increase collaboration between communities and local government officials and security actors in responding to these signs; and to enhance mutual understanding of their roles in protecting their communities.
Strengthening Community Resilience through Peace Building	State's Public Affairs Section at the U.S. Embassy Abuja conducts the Strengthening Community Resilience through Peace Building project through a grant to an implementing partner. The project intends to train 50 youth in conflict resolution. The participants, supported by traditional elders, engage in local community-driven initiatives. The goal is to strengthen conflict resolution capacity at the community level by promoting peaceful dialogue and tolerance in S. Kaduna state.
The B Chronicles—A Radio Drama Series	State's Bureau of African Affairs, Office of Security Affairs, conducts this effort through a grant to an implementing partner who is to produce and air 52 episodes of a weekly radio drama based on stories of victims of the Boko Haram insurgency, especially women and children. The series focuses on reducing the risks of radicalization and recruitment, while encouraging adult listeners to reflect on the effects of the insurgency on their communities and vulnerable groups. The B Chronicles, created in English but performed in Hausa and Kanuri, are interpreted by the actors and aired on radio stations in Bauchi, Gombe, Adamawa, Yobe, and Borno states. The series targets a regional audience of approximately 6–8 million people. The goal of this project is to chronicle and help mitigate the current security challenges in Northern and Northeastern Nigeria through real life stories that encourage dialogue while fostering peace, respect, and the spirit of community. This effort is a TSCTP project, and the U.S. Embassy Abuja Public Affairs Section also supports it.

Appendix II: State Reported Conflict Mitigation and Stabilization Efforts for Iraq, Nigeria, and Syria, Fiscal Year 2017

Conflict mitigation and stabilization effort	State's description of effort and its goals
Training Almajiri as Peace Promoters in Kano	State's Public Affairs Section at the U.S. Embassy Abuja conducts the Training Almajiri as Peace Promoters in Kano project through a grant to an implementing partner. This project intends to train 240 students from the formal education system and the traditional Islamic school system (Almajiri) as peace ambassadors. Student participants advocate for peaceful conflict resolution, improvements in youth education, and incorporation of Almajiri schools into the formal educational system.
Training of Youth Leaders and Community Influencers	State's Public Affairs Section at the U.S. Embassy Abuja conducts the Training of Youth Leaders and Community Influencers effort through a grant to an implementing partner. The project intends to train 25 youth and community influencers from Adamawa, Borno, and Yobe states as CVE messengers with enhanced leadership skills. The goal is to develop peer-to-peer CVE messengers with proven community influence to mitigate propaganda and recruitment efforts of violent extremist organizations.
Transformation of Farmer/Herder Conflict in Plateau State	State's Public Affairs Section at the U.S. Embassy Abuja conducts the Transformation of Farmer/Herder Conflict in Plateau State effort through a grant to an implementing partner. This project convenes dialogues between farmer and herder stakeholders in Plateau state to develop mechanisms to resolve disputes between these groups. The goal is to establish a multistakeholder peace architecture committee to periodically review conflict risks and to develop a framework for adjudicating conflict.
United in Diversity: Improving Inter-Ethnic Respect and Tolerance in Kaduna State, Nigeria	State's Public Affairs Section at the U.S. Embassy Abuja, conducts the United in Diversity effort through a grant to an implementing partner. This project aims to increase a core team of 25 youths' conflict resolution skills and, through a Training of Trainers model, to train additional youths. The goal is to facilitate interreligious dialogue between religious groups.
Vocational Training for Women in Adamawa State, Northeast Nigeria	State's Bureau of African Affairs, Office of Security Affairs, conducts the Vocational Training for Women in Adamawa State through a grant to an implementing partner. This effort is a TSCTP project, and the U.S. Embassy Abuja Public Affairs section also supports it. This project intends to provide rural women living in IDP camps and the surrounding communities with training and employment opportunities in poultry and cash-crop farming to help raise their social status, enhance their self-esteem, and encourage self-reliance to contribute income to their households. The goal is to help these women learn to recognize and resist techniques and methods of recruitment and radicalization to violence; and provide options for resisting recruitment into violent extremist organizations.
Youth for Healthy Communities Initiative	State's Bureau of African Affairs, Office of Security Affairs, conducts the Youth for Healthy Communities Initiative through a grant to an implementing partner. This program is a community initiative anchored in athletic competition that offers concurrent workshops and creates social and mentoring networks to engage youth on issues of civic responsibility, conflict mitigation, and the dangers of drug abuse and violent extremism. This effort is a TSCTP project, and the U.S. Embassy Abuja Public Affairs Section also supports it. The goals of this program are to build teamwork and leadership skills, foster citizen responsibility, and counter drug abuse and the risk of recruitment and radicalization to violence among vulnerable youth in the Kano city metropolitan area.

**Appendix II: State Reported Conflict Mitigation
and Stabilization Efforts for Iraq, Nigeria, and
Syria, Fiscal Year 2017**

Conflict mitigation and stabilization effort	State's description of effort and its goals
SYRIA	
Access to Justice and Community Security Program	State's Bureau of Near Eastern Affairs (NEA), Office of Near Eastern Affairs Assistance Coordination, is responsible for the Access to Justice and Community Security Program, which provides training, equipment, and stipends to Free Syrian Police stations in liberated areas of Syria. The United States supports 56 Free Syrian Police stations comprising approximately 3,500 officers. Support includes vehicles, equipment, stipends, and training to help moderate community security actors to establish public security and stand up local unarmed civilian police forces. State conducts this effort through an implementing partner, and NEA manages this effort as part of the Syria Transition Assistance Response Team based in U.S. Embassy Ankara. The program's goal is to improve local stability, mitigate sectarian violence, and counter the influence of violent extremists.
Building the Legitimacy of Local Councils	State's NEA, Office of Near Eastern Affairs Assistance Coordination, conducts the Building the Legitimacy of Local Councils effort through an implementing partner. NEA manages this effort as part of the Syria Transition Assistance Response Team, which is based in U.S. Embassy Ankara. The effort aims to build the capacity of local and provincial councils and civilian networks through (1) organizational development, standardized processes, and institutional capacity for effective civil administration; (2) strengthened cooperation between local and provincial councils, civil society organizations, Free Syrian Police, technical directorates, and moderate armed actors; (3) increased engagement between citizens and opposition governance structures; (4) increased inclusiveness in governance structures, especially with regard to representation of women, religious and ethnic minorities, and other marginalized populations; and (5) more effective provision of basic local governance services to meet citizen priorities and needs through cash subgrants for essential services. The goal of the effort is to strengthen the moderate Syrian institutions by building their capacity to provide services, promote stability, counter extremism, and advocate for political dialogue.
Civil Society in Syria (Taawon/Wiaam)	State's NEA, Office of Near Eastern Affairs Assistance Coordination, conducts the Civil Society in Syria effort through an implementing partner. NEA manages this effort as part of the Syria Transition Assistance Response Team, which is based in U.S. Embassy Ankara. Through cash subgrants, this effort works to enhance civil society and advocacy organizations in eastern and western Syria to implement activities that (1) improve communication mechanisms with constituents and key stakeholders in reconciliation, conflict mediation, and advocacy efforts; (2) increase citizen understanding of rights and civic responsibilities; (3) enhance civil society advocacy efforts to promote strengthened competitive, inclusive, and transparent political processes; (4) improve organizational structures and internal processes that allow civil society organizations to become more effective public advocates; and (5) provide community services, such as vocational training for women and youth and essential services in areas newly liberated from ISIS where governance bodies are still emerging. The goal of the effort is to increase the ability of civil society organizations to serve, represent, and advocate for all Syrians and hold local governance structures accountable.

Appendix II: State Reported Conflict Mitigation and Stabilization Efforts for Iraq, Nigeria, and Syria, Fiscal Year 2017

Conflict mitigation and stabilization effort	State's description of effort and its goals
Civil Society Support for Peacebuilding, Reconciliation, and Conflict Mitigation	State's DRL conducts the Civil Society Support for Peacebuilding, Reconciliation, and Conflict Mitigation effort through implementing partners. These efforts provide funding to build local leadership and reconciliation processes and to support activities related to inclusive peace-building and conflict mitigation that are specifically designed to be more responsive to the evolving nature of the conflict. Current programming focuses on local community members, including women, religious minorities, and other marginalized populations, to use advocacy and other skills needed to effectively engage with armed factions. This work also supports the political transition process by fortifying the conditions for stabilization and empowering local leadership.
Explosive Remnants of War Clearance	State's Bureau of Political-Military Affairs supports ERW clearance efforts in areas of northeast Syria recently liberated from ISIS, in particular the urban centers of Raqqa and Tabqa cities. Following their defeat, ISIS placed mass-produced, technologically advanced IEDs and booby-traps in homes, public spaces, farm land, and infrastructure to discourage the return of IDPs and cut off essential services. As IDPs return to their communities, these devices continue to perpetuate ISIS's reign of terror by indiscriminately killing civilians and impeding stabilization operations. ERW clearance programs, which State conducts through implementing partners, supports the urgent marking, survey and clearance of explosive hazards from critical infrastructure associated with the delivery of clean water, electricity, healthcare, education, and governance to facilitate follow-on stabilization projects, the restoration of basic community services, and the return of IDPs in coordination with USAID and other State offices.
Meaningful Justice and Accountability for Syria That Holds Perpetrators Accountable and Responds to Syrian Grievances	State's DRL conducts the Meaningful Justice and Accountability for Syria efforts through implementing partners. These efforts involve the documentation of human rights violations committed by all parties; increased coordination among international and local civil society groups on transitional justice processes, including memorialization; and support to survivors of torture, sexual and gender-based violence, and other gross human rights violations. The goal is to support the capacity of local civil society groups to secure and preserve documentation of human rights abuses and increase advocacy around accountability and transitional justice mechanisms, including domestic and regional led efforts.
Mine Risk Education and Information Management	State's Bureau of Political-Military Affairs delivers Mine Risk Education, through nongovernmental organizations, to affected communities by teaching children and young adults about the dangers posed by explosive hazards. Also, due to the lack of national capacity, a mine action nongovernmental organization collects, stores, and disseminates data on areas contaminated and cleared to the coalition, nongovernmental organizations, humanitarian community, and military.
Strengthening Social Cohesion in Northern Syria	State's DRL awarded funds to the U.S. Institute of Peace to conduct the Strengthening Social Cohesion in Northern Syria effort, which aims to provide positive engagement and lines of communication across religious and sectarian groups, particularly in key districts prone to sectarian violence. The goals are to (1) support Syrian civilian networks to maintain stabilization and mitigate violence and (2) manage localized ceasefires, including reconciliation and stabilization of areas as they are being liberated.

Appendix II: State Reported Conflict Mitigation and Stabilization Efforts for Iraq, Nigeria, and Syria, Fiscal Year 2017

Conflict mitigation and stabilization effort	State's description of effort and its goals
Syria's Education Program (Idarah/Injaz)	State's NEA, Office of Near Eastern Affairs Assistance Coordination, conducts Syria's Education Program through an implementing partner that works closely with opposition education directorates in Western Syria and moderate education actors in newly liberated areas in the east to (1) support the development of the Syrian Interim Government's aligned Provincial Education Directorates and other education actors to better manage education in non-regime-controlled communities; (2) provide stipends and salaries for education staff to ensure schools have people to deliver education; (3) engage in teacher training; (4) provide light refurbishments and supplies for damaged schools, and; (5) provide psychosocial support and training to children, teachers, and community members. NEA manages this effort as part of the Syria Transition Assistance Response Team, which is based in U.S. Embassy Ankara. The goal of this effort is to improve equitable access to Syrians to moderate, vital education services for youth and children.

Source: GAO analysis of data and documents provided by State. | GAO-18-654

Notes: State defined conflict mitigation and stabilization efforts as programs that "reduce the threat or impact of violent conflict and promote the peaceful resolution of differences, mitigate violence if it has already broken out, establish a framework for peace and reconciliation, and provide for the transition from conflict to post-conflict environments."

We did not independently verify whether State's reported list of conflict mitigation and stabilization efforts included all such efforts in Iraq, Nigeria, and Syria (and in neighboring countries for Syria).

For the purposes of this list of efforts and goals, "efforts" includes what our sources referred to as "programs," "program-level initiatives," and "projects."

Countries for which State conducts efforts are shaded in gray.

^aISIS is also variously referred to as the Islamic State of Iraq and al-Sham, Daesh, and the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL).

^bDRL considers specific programs in Iraq that are part of this effort to be sensitive; thus, only general information summarizing these programs is provided here.

^cEstablished in 2005, the TSCTP is a multifaceted, multiyear strategy implemented jointly by State, the U.S. Agency for International Development, and the Department of Defense to assist partners in West and North Africa increase their immediate and long-term capabilities to address terrorist threats and prevent the spread of violent extremism.

Appendix III: USAID Reported Conflict Mitigation and Stabilization Efforts for Iraq, Nigeria, and Syria, Fiscal Year 2017

Conflict mitigation and stabilization effort	USAID's description of effort and its goals
IRAQ	
Contributions to the United Nations Development Program (UNDP) Funding Facility for Stabilization (FFS)	The U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID), along with other international donors, supplies funding to the UNDP FFS. The UNDP, at the request of the Prime Minister of Iraq, and with support from leading members of the Coalition to Degrade and Defeat the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL), ^a established the FFS in June 2015 to help rapidly stabilize newly retaken areas. The FFS works in areas liberated from the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS)—another name for ISIL—to restore essential services and kick-start the local economy. The FFS rehabilitates water, health, electricity, education, and municipal light infrastructure. The FFS also provides temporary employment to local laborers to remove rubble and grants to small businesses to restock and reopen. The aim of the FFS is to help restore confidence in the leading role of the Iraqi government in newly retaken areas, give populations a sense of progress and forward momentum, and enable the voluntary return of internally displaced persons.
NIGERIA	
Building Bridges Between Herders and Farmers in Nasarawa, Plateau, and Kaduna States	USAID's Office of Peace and Democratic Governance (PDG) is responsible for the Building Bridges Between Herders and Farmers in Nasarawa, Plateau, and Kaduna States effort. The overall goal is to strengthen engagement and understanding to reduce conflict between the nomadic pastoralist and sedentary farming communities in the three states. Given the herders' and farmers' ethnic, religious, economic, and lifestyle differences, these two groups rarely come into contact with each other outside of confrontational scenarios or passing encounters, creating a deadly social disconnect that risks dehumanizing each community in the other's eyes. The program aims to achieve its goal by (1) improving intercultural understanding between nomadic pastoralist and sedentary farming communities and (2) building capable coalitions between community leaders, civil society, and government to prevent conflict between nomadic pastoralist and sedentary farming communities.
Education Crisis Response (ECR)	USAID's Education Office is responsible for the ECR, which, addresses the main learning needs of internally displaced and host community pupils affected by the crisis in Northeast Nigeria through nonformal learning centers, Youth Learning Centers, and Adolescent Girls Learning Centers. The ECR provides learning in protective centers, supports integration of pupils from nonformal to formal schools, and works within communities hosting internally displaced persons. For example, the ECR established more than 935 nonformal learning centers that provided services to internally displaced children and youth and their host communities affected by violence in Adamawa, Bauchi, Borno, Gombe, and Yobe. Nonformal centers may be located in churches, mosques, Qur'anic schools, and other locations. The services provided included access to quality education, psycho-social counseling, child-friendly spaces, and opportunities for peer reading, mentoring, counseling, and vocational skills training. The ECR also trains and mobilizes instructors to provide conflict-sensitive lessons, while engaging communities and local leaders to increase education options, such as nonformal learning centers. The ECR has provided assistance to over 80,341 individuals since 2014. The overall goal is to support the efforts of northeastern states and local governments to take full ownership for the continued education of internally displaced children.

**Appendix III: USAID Reported Conflict
Mitigation and Stabilization Efforts for Iraq,
Nigeria, and Syria, Fiscal Year 2017**

Conflict mitigation and stabilization effort	USAID's description of effort and its goals
Engaging Communities for Peace in Nigeria	USAID's PDG is responsible for the Engaging Communities for Peace in Nigeria effort. The initial goal was to reduce violence between farmers and pastoralists in Nigeria's Middle Belt states in target sites by (1) strengthening the capacity of farmer and pastoralist leaders to resolve disputes in an inclusive, sustainable manner; (2) leveraging social and economic opportunities to build trust across lines of division; and (3) fostering engagement among farmer-pastoralist communities, local authorities, and neighboring communities to prevent conflict. Under a scope and cost extension, PDG expanded the effort to help with conflict sensitivity integration throughout the USAID mission's portfolio, and build the technical and operations capacity of nongovernmental organizations working on peace building in the northeast. PDG intends to do this by providing (1) conflict mitigation, monitoring and evaluation, and administrative/financial management training to civil society organizations in the northeast, and (2) conflict analysis and conflict mitigation training for USAID mission personnel and implementing partners anywhere in the country.
Nigeria Regional Transition Initiative	USAID's Office of Transitional Initiatives (OTI) launched the Nigeria Regional Transition Initiative in September 2014 to minimize conditions that allow terrorism to flourish, in turn reducing Boko Haram and ISIS-West Africa recruitment and support for their ideology and the insecurity they cause. Following a Strategic Review Session in September 2017, OTI established a new program goal: to deny terrorists space to operate. The goal has a two pronged focus: (1) to "compete" with ISIS-West Africa, thereby reducing its appeal before it is able to seize and hold significant territory and (2) to continue to work on issues that weaken Boko Haram's ability to operate. OTI's two main objectives to achieve this goal are to offer alternatives to extremist action for vulnerable individuals and increase community resilience to extremist action.
Training of Religious Leaders for National Coexistence (TOLERANCE)	USAID's PDG is responsible for the TOLERANCE effort, which aims to support stability in Nigeria by enhancing the legitimacy and capacity of governance structures to defend religious freedom. TOLERANCE supports community-based peacebuilding approaches by strengthening the capacity of religious and traditional leaders, women and youth groups, government officials, and civil society to mitigate and manage conflicts, and improve responses to threats and outbreaks of violence. TOLERANCE is implemented in seven states—Borno, Bauchi, Imo, Kaduna, Kano, Plateau, and Sokoto. A human rights funding component promotes the culture of interfaith peaceful coexistence between target states in the North and South, respect for human rights, religious freedom and nonviolent elections. The goal of TOLERANCE is to develop an active network of religious, government, and civil society leaders that can effectively address ethno-religious violence in Northern Nigeria and beyond through shared strategies and common messages that have strong resonance and popular support from a wide range of stakeholders.

**Appendix III: USAID Reported Conflict
Mitigation and Stabilization Efforts for Iraq,
Nigeria, and Syria, Fiscal Year 2017**

Conflict mitigation and stabilization effort	USAID's description of effort and its goals
SYRIA	
Contributions to the Syria Recovery Trust Fund (SRTF)	<p>USAID contributes funding to the SRTF, a multidonor trust fund initiated by the Group of Friends of the Syrian People and its Working Group on Economic Recovery and Development. The SRTF's core objective is to relieve the suffering of the Syrian people affected by the ongoing conflict through recovery and rehabilitation efforts undertaken in partnership with the Interim Government of the Syrian Opposition Coalition, local councils, local community organizations, and service providers. While the conflict continues, the SRTF assists Syrian communities in opposition-controlled territories by funding essential services and early recovery programming in critical sectors, including health, electricity, water, agriculture and food security, education, and waste management. For example, the SRTF completed the renovation of two gynecological operating rooms, two obstetrics rooms, adult and pediatric intensive care units, and provided incubators, an oxygen generation system, and 6 months' worth of essential medications to a hospital in Aleppo Governorate so that it could treat an average of 1,000 patients each month. More than 2 million Syrians have received assistance through more than 30 SRTF projects. USAID funds totaling almost \$60 million to date have leveraged other donor funds totaling \$190 million. USAID's goal is to support the restoration of essential services and early recovery. USAID's Bureau for the Middle East (ME) provides support for the SRTF.</p>
Promoting Inclusive and Democratic Engagement (PRIDE) Program	<p>USAID's ME is responsible for the PRIDE program, which supports the establishment of robust, inclusive, effective, and accountable democratic processes and institutions in opposition-held areas and areas liberated from ISIS and advances freedom, dignity, and development. The goal of the program is to increase political and civic participation and representation of women, youth, and minorities, to foster public and stakeholder confidence in peaceful and representative transitional political processes and bolster opposition credibility. PRIDE is also intended to increase knowledge and understanding of democratic processes among the Syrian population, including consensus building, coalition formation, citizen and stakeholder engagement, and elections, which will enhance an inclusive Syrian-led transition.</p>
Support to Syrian Livelihoods (SLS) Program	<p>USAID's ME and the Offices of U.S. Foreign Disaster Assistance and Food for Peace are responsible for the SLS program, which is intended to help increase production and productivity of key products that have both food security and market potential, in moderate, opposition-held areas and areas liberated from ISIS. The effort is based on the theory that if communities have humanitarian support in the short-term and have access to agricultural inputs and extension, they will adopt behaviors that increase productivity along with household-level income, ultimately improving food security and resilience to shocks. ME and the Office of Foreign Disaster Assistance have funded an implementing partner to initiate this effort in fiscal year 2017. If this effort is successful, USAID intends to replicate this effort in other barley-belt areas of Syria, including in the Idleb, Raqqa, and Hasakah governorates.</p>
Syria Essential Services II (SES II)	<p>USAID's ME is responsible for the SES II effort, which supports the restoration of essential services through local councils in communities. The essential services include support for water services, electricity, sewage systems, public use buildings, agricultural infrastructure, and market access. The program provides technical and material assistance, including capacity building for local councils and civil society, engineering expertise and other training, and cash grants to communities. The goal of the program is to restore essential services and strengthen institutions in non-regime areas.</p>

Appendix III: USAID Reported Conflict Mitigation and Stabilization Efforts for Iraq, Nigeria, and Syria, Fiscal Year 2017

Conflict mitigation and stabilization effort	USAID's description of effort and its goals
Syria Regional Program (SRP)	<p>USAID's OTI is responsible for the SRP. The SRP works closely with trusted and vetted local organizations to implement quick-impact activities that promote an inclusive and stable Syria. OTI has conducted this effort since 2012 through an implementing partner that has implemented about 538 activities through about 155 local and provincial partners and 570 subpartners with a budget of about \$172.5 million. OTI works along three lines of effort: (1) enable the early recovery of areas liberated from ISIS; (2) strengthen communities' ability to resist extremist groups; and (3) maintain and increase the influence of strategic moderate actors. For example, OTI partners restore services in communities liberated from ISIS to reduce ISIS's appeal; support local councils and civil society organizations, increasing the influence of moderate actors in strategic areas where extremist groups are vying for control; and support Syrian Civil Defense and impartial emergency responders who amplify the voice of Syrians struggling against extremism and authoritarianism. OTI aims to support resistance to extremists, particularly ISIS, by strengthening individuals and groups who are saving lives, meeting basic needs, promoting moderate values, and engaging with vulnerable populations.</p>

Source: GAO analysis of data and documents provided by USAID. | GAO-18-654

Notes: USAID defined conflict mitigation and stabilization efforts as programs that “reduce the threat or impact of violent conflict and promote the peaceful resolution of differences, mitigate violence if it has already broken out, establish a framework for peace and reconciliation, and provide for the transition from conflict to post-conflict environments.”

We did not independently verify whether USAID's reported list of conflict mitigation and stabilization efforts included all such efforts in Iraq, Nigeria, and Syria (and in neighboring countries for Syria).

For the purposes of this list of efforts and goals, “efforts” includes what our sources referred to as “programs,” “program-level initiatives,” and “projects.”

USAID conducted its efforts through grants and contracts to implementing partners.

Countries for which USAID conducts efforts are shaded in gray.

^aISIS is also variously referred to as the Islamic State of Iraq and al-Sham, Daesh, and the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL).

Appendix IV: DOD Reported Stabilization Efforts for Iraq and Syria, Fiscal Year 2017

Conflict stabilization effort	DOD's description of effort and its goals
IRAQ	
Mosul: Immediate Medical Trauma Supplies	Medical Staff of the Combined Joint Forces Land Component Command–Operation Inherent Resolve provided immediate medical trauma supplies to the World Health Organization to fill a gap in medical supplies available to treat injured civilians. The project was coordinated with the Department of State (State) and the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) and was funded through the Overseas Humanitarian, Disaster, and Civic Aid (OHDACA) appropriation. The project was intended to increase the chance of survival for civilians affected by military operations; increase civilian confidence in the government and the humanitarian assistance community; and provide access, influence, and visibility to the Department of Defense (DOD).
SYRIA	
Ar Raqqa Winterization	U.S. Army Civil Affairs (CA) personnel of Special Operations Joint Task Force–Operation Inherent Resolve (SOJTF–OIR) provided winterization kits including jackets, hats, gloves, socks, and blankets to Syrian civilians displaced from their homes in the Raqqa region. The project provided much needed cold weather items. This project was coordinated with State and USAID and funded through the OHDACA appropriation. The project was intended to alleviate human suffering; pull the population away from Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) ^a population centers; and provide access, visibility, and influence for DOD forces.
Hamad Winterization	U.S. Army CA personnel of SOJTF–OIR provided 1,200 winterization kits consisting of jackets, hats, gloves, and socks to Syrian families in the Hamad desert. This project addressed a critical need among the poorest and most vulnerable of the Syrian population. The project was coordinated with State and USAID and was funded through the OHDACA appropriation. The project was intended to alleviate human suffering; support DOD efforts to diminish ISIL influence; and provide access, visibility, and influence for DOD forces.
Humanitarian Assistance to Populace in Manbij	U.S. Army CA personnel of SOJTF–OIR provided assistance, including food, cooking fuel, construction material, and garbage removal, for up to 31,000 civilians in Manbij, Syria. DOD undertook this project because USAID and State were unable to provide any support to the civilians in need. This project was coordinated with State and USAID and was funded through the OHDACA appropriation. The project was intended to alleviate human suffering and improve the civilian populace's perception of the local council.
Karamah School Supplies	U.S. Army CA personnel of SOJTF–OIR provided basic education supplies and equipment, including desks, chairs, and whiteboards, to schools in Karamah. This project was coordinated with State and USAID and funded through the OHDACA appropriation. The project was intended to assist in reestablishment of education services in the area, enhance the local council's ability to provide essential services and increase their standing with the community, and provide access to DOD forces operating in the area.
Kobani School Supplies	U.S. Army CA personnel of SOJTF–OIR provided basic education supplies and equipment, including desks, chairs, whiteboards, and backpacks, to schools in Kobani. This project was coordinated with State and USAID and funded through the OHDACA appropriation. The project was intended to assist in reestablishment of education services, improve the capacity of the local government to provide essential services; improve the perception of the local council; and provide access, visibility, and influence for DOD forces.

Appendix IV: DOD Reported Stabilization Efforts for Iraq and Syria, Fiscal Year 2017

Conflict stabilization effort	DOD's description of effort and its goals
Manbij School Supplies	U.S. Army CA personnel of SOJTF–OIR provided classroom furniture and school supplies to 4,000 students in Manbij. The project, managed through the local council, provided a viable opportunity to resume attending classes for students who had not attended school in over 4 years. The project was coordinated with State and USAID and funded through the OHDACA appropriation. The project was intended to assist in reestablishment of education services; improve the perception of the local council; and provide access, visibility, and influence for DOD forces.
Raqqa Province Winterization	U.S. Army CA personnel of SOJTF–OIR provided winterization kits, including jackets, hats, gloves, socks, and blankets, to civilians in the Raqqa region. The project provided much needed winter clothing to civilians who had fled their homes due to ISIL operations. The project was coordinated with State and USAID and funded through the OHDACA appropriation. The project was conducted through the local council and intended to alleviate human suffering, build the council's legitimacy, and provide access to DOD forces.
Winterization for Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) in Manbij	U.S. Army CA personnel of SOJTF–OIR provided winterization kits, including jackets, hats, gloves, socks, and blankets to civilians in the Manbij region. The project provided cold weather items, through the local council, to civilians fleeing ISIL forces because State and USAID were unable to provide support. The project was coordinated with State and USAID and funded through the OHDACA appropriation. The project was intended to alleviate human suffering, elevate the standing of the local council with the populace, and improve access to DOD forces operating in the area.

Source: GAO analysis of data and documents provided by DOD. | GAO-18-654

Notes: DOD defined stabilization as “an integrated civilian and military process applied in designated fragile and conflict affected areas outside the United States to establish civil security, address drivers of instability, and create conditions for sustainable stability—a condition characterized by local political systems that can peaceably manage conflict and change; effective and accountable institutions that can provide essential services; and societies that respect fundamental human rights and the rule of law.” According to Office of the Undersecretary of Defense for Policy officials, the definition of stabilization will be revised in fiscal year 2018, at which time OHDACA-supported efforts will no longer be considered stabilization efforts. According to DOD officials, the humanitarian assistance efforts DOD reported for fiscal year 2017 complemented broader U.S. government stabilization efforts.

We did not independently verify whether DOD's reported list of conflict mitigation and stabilization efforts included all such efforts in Iraq, Nigeria, and Syria (and in neighboring countries for Syria).

For the purposes of this list of efforts and goals, “efforts” includes what our sources referred to as “programs,” “program-level initiatives,” and “projects.”

Countries for which DOD conducts efforts are shaded in gray.

³ISIL is also variously referred to as the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS), Islamic State of Iraq and al-Sham, and Daesh.

Appendix V: USIP Reported Conflict Prevention and Resolution Efforts for Iraq, Nigeria, and Syria, Fiscal Year 2017

Conflict prevention and resolution effort	USIP's description of effort and its goals
IRAQ	
Advancing the Role of Iraqi Minorities in Stabilization and Governance	The U.S. Institute of Peace's (USIP) Middle East and Africa Center (MEA) is responsible for the Advancing the Role of Iraqi Minorities in Stabilization and Governance effort with funding from and in partnership with the Department of State's (State) Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor. This effort creates mechanisms for gathering and sharing high-quality information with key Iraqi decision makers and stakeholders on the minorities' situations, regardless of whether these groups return home or remain displaced. The project utilizes and acts upon information gathered through facilitated local dialogues that prevent violence (especially violence stemming from revenge killing) and/or reduce tensions between displaced minorities and host communities. Improving access to this information is intended to strengthen the role of civil society in stabilization and enable Iraqi decision makers to enact more inclusive and information-based governance policies. The specific objectives are to (1) improve key decision makers' understanding of conflict drivers in liberated and minority-rich areas and (2) reduce tensions among and between communities in Nineveh and other minority areas during the stabilization process and in the build-up to provincial-level, Kurdish Regional Government, and national elections. The goal of the effort is to improve stabilization and promote inclusive governance in areas liberated from the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS) ^a in Nineveh province and other minority-rich territories.
Facilitated Dialogues in Iraq	USIP's MEA and its strategic partner, Sanad for Peacebuilding, conduct the Facilitated Dialogues effort in Iraq. The effort supports facilitated, outcome-oriented dialogue processes that enable local reconciliation in areas liberated from ISIS. This type of engagement has two main objectives in the current context: (1) preventing revenge acts of violence by communities in conflict and (2) identifying and addressing the main barriers impeding the return of internally displaced persons (IDP). Such engagement is intended to increase the resilience of communities to the persistent threat of violent extremism from ISIS remnants, the Popular Mobilization Forces, or others.
Justice and Security Dialogues (JSD) – Lessons Learned	USIP's Center for Applied Conflict Transformation (ACT) is responsible for the JSD – Lessons Learned effort. Approximately 200 security and community representatives from three major cities affected by the aftermath of ISIS participated in nine JSD sessions as part of an assessment on preventing violent extremism in Iraq. The project culminated in a conference attended by members of the JSD-Community of Practice (COP), a network of local leaders committed to dialogue processes established by USIP through its ongoing engagement in Iraq to support dialogue. The project's three objectives are to (1) better understand local drivers of violent extremism through the multiple perspectives included in the JSD-COP, (2) strengthen capacity of the JSD-COP to continue efforts to sustain local stability and promote the rule of law, and (3) identify key lessons learned to further strengthen future JSD initiatives in the region.
Mapping Post-ISIS Iraqi Religious Groups for Peace and Reconciliation	USIP's ACT is responsible for the Mapping Post-ISIS Iraqi Religious Groups for Peace and Reconciliation effort. ACT is partnering with country teams to undertake mappings of influential religious actors, institutions, and ideas in conflict zones. This project identifies and maps influential religious leaders in specific conflict zones with the long-term goal of including them in future Iraqi-led mediations, dialogues, and peace and reconciliation efforts.

**Appendix V: USIP Reported Conflict
Prevention and Resolution Efforts for Iraq,
Nigeria, and Syria, Fiscal Year 2017**

Conflict prevention and resolution effort	USIP’s description of effort and its goals
Problem-Solving Dialogues for Iraq’s Religious Minorities and Governance Issues	<p>USIP’s MEA is responsible for the Problem-Solving Dialogues for Iraq’s Religious Minorities and Governance Issues with funding from and in partnership with State’s Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor. The effort addresses tensions and disputes between the Christian and Shabak communities in Nineveh in the wake of ISIS, pushing toward outcome-oriented solutions through facilitated dialogues led by experienced Iraqi facilitators. This effort also provides the USIP-created Alliance of Iraqi Minorities (AIM) with experience in project development and execution as AIM seeks to improve its impact on the provincial budget process, curriculum reform, outreach, and influencing specific legislation pertaining to minorities. The effort supports AIM’s organizational capacity toward becoming more independent, self-reliant, and self-sustaining through developing the capacity and assuming total responsibility for its organizational, administrative, programmatic, financial, and logistical affairs. Establishing facilitated dialogues among Iraq’s religious minorities and, most importantly, between those groups and the majority Muslim communities, is especially important as Nineveh is home to one of Iraq’s largest concentration of minorities. The goal of the effort is for Iraqis—minorities in particular—to prevent the recurrence of violence through peaceful dialogue with each other and various stakeholders, including national, provincial, and local governments.</p>
Support to Sanad for Peacebuilding	<p>USIP’s MEA is responsible for the Support to Sanad for Peacebuilding effort. This effort provides ongoing technical and financial support to USIP’s strategic national partner, Sanad, and the networks it manages, including the Network of Iraqi Facilitators and the Alliance of Iraqi Minorities. Sanad and its affiliated networks serve as a resource for conflict analysis, bringing disputing parties together through facilitated dialogue and providing technical expertise for training and peacebuilding. The goal, through helping Sanad become Iraq’s leading and self-sustaining peacebuilding organization, is to increase Iraqi capacity and leadership in conflict prevention and mitigation.</p>
Training Iraqis in Conflict Management	<p>USIP’s MEA is responsible for the Training Iraqis in Conflict Management effort. This project provides training to both governmental and nongovernmental organizations, including officials and civil society activists in Kurdistan working to prevent the escalation of tensions among the nearly 1.8 million IDPs located there and in local communities. It also provides technical support to the Kurdish Regional Government on the implementation of Iraq’s national action plan under United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325, and ongoing assistance to Iraq’s National Reconciliation Committee and other governmental bodies that play a key role in local and national reconciliation. The goal of the project is to enable a variety of Iraqi organizations to use the tools and skills taught to them by professional trainers and USIP staff to resolve local tensions that have the potential to reignite sectarian tensions on a large scale. Building the skills of Iraqis in this field is intended to enable them to solve issues stemming from extremist violence and local sectarian conflict without external aid, thus stopping violence at its sources before it spreads to other communities and causes further destabilization.</p>

**Appendix V: USIP Reported Conflict
Prevention and Resolution Efforts for Iraq,
Nigeria, and Syria, Fiscal Year 2017**

Conflict prevention and resolution effort	USIP's description of effort and its goals
Youth Leaders' Exchange with His Holiness the Dalai Lama	USIP's ACT was responsible for the Youth Leaders' Exchange with His Holiness the Dalai Lama. In November 2017, USIP and the Dalai Lama hosted a second annual dialogue with youth peacebuilders drawn from countries across Africa, Asia, and the Middle East, including Iraq. Many of these countries grapple with the world's deadliest conflicts, as well as campaigns by extremist groups to incite youth to violence. The youth leaders are among their countries' most effective peacebuilders. The dialogue with the Dalai Lama was intended to help them to build the practical skills and personal resilience they need to work against the tensions or violence in their homelands. The overarching goal was to strengthen the capacity of youth to create positive change as leaders and peacebuilders in their communities by partnering with more traditional leaders.
NIGERIA	
A Strategy for Countering Violent Extremism for Nigeria	USIP's MEA is responsible for the development of a USIP strategy for countering violent extremism (CVE) for Nigeria that is integrated with its Nigeria country strategy and consistent with USIP's overall CVE strategy. Working in collaboration with ACT, MEA partners with a local organization for project implementation and uses local staff for support. This effort is intended to further USIP's current process of strengthening its Nigeria country strategy to guide program initiatives for its Africa team and USIP more broadly. The goal is to deepen and expand USIP's programming and thought leadership in the field of CVE through initiatives based on an evidence-based assessment.
Election Security Assessment: Nigeria 2019 General Elections	USIP's MEA and ACT are responsible for the Election Security Assessment. Together with selected partners, USIP began three assessment rounds in Washington, D.C., and Nigeria focused on assessing election violence risks and gaps in electoral security and peacebuilding planning. USIP works closely with State's Nigeria desk, USAID's political section, the USAID's mission at U.S. Embassy Abuja, and relevant international and local partners engaged in election programming. The assessment will produce programmatic recommendations to address identified vulnerabilities and seize opportunities for the promotion of peaceful elections. The goal of the effort is to help ensure that the prevention activities by USIP, U.S. government partners and civil society are better integrated and evidence-based.
Generation Change Fellows Program (GCFP)	USIP's ACT is responsible for the GCFP, which strengthens youth leaders' peacebuilding skills and creates a community of practice through which they can learn from and mentor each other, share best practices, and work to create positive change in their communities. GCFP carefully selects small cohorts of dedicated peacebuilders aged 18–35 through a highly competitive application process. These Fellows hold leadership roles within their local communities and tackle challenges, from countering violent extremism to enhancing gender equality. The goal of the GCFP is to increase youth leaders' participation in and contribution to conflict transformation and positive social change in conflict-affected communities.
Justice and Security Dialogue Project in the Sahel and Maghreb	USIP's ACT, with funding from and in partnership with State's Bureau of International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs, is responsible for the Justice and Security Dialogue Project in the Sahel and Maghreb. The project offers opportunities to develop, refine, and test models and tools through field pilot experimentation in six countries, including Nigeria. The project aims to strengthen the relationship between civilian security services and communities at the local level and to pilot a model for bridging the gap between police and citizens for use across the region. Through a series of dialogues and activities supported by USIP and local partners, participants will collaboratively identify and address concrete security challenges at the local level.

**Appendix V: USIP Reported Conflict
Prevention and Resolution Efforts for Iraq,
Nigeria, and Syria, Fiscal Year 2017**

Conflict prevention and resolution effort	USIP's description of effort and its goals
Lake Chad Basin and Sahel Working Group	USIP's MEA is responsible for the Lake Chad Basin and Sahel Working Group. USIP will convene a working group focused on addressing the drivers of violent extremism in the Lake Chad Basin and the Sahel. This will include developing a research framework, drawing on ACT's CVE assessment tool, and commissioning a series of papers by academics, policy experts, and practitioners from countries across the region. The goal is to advance USIP's thought leadership in the field of preventing violent extremism by studying the impact of the Boko Haram crisis in the context of broader regional dynamics and the potential for more regional approaches to foster resilience to violent extremism.
Lake Chad Basin Project: Toward a Sustainable and Peaceful Resolution of the Crisis in Northern Nigeria	USIP's MEA is responsible for the Lake Chad Basin Project, with funding from and in partnership with State's Bureau of Conflict and Stabilization Operations. This project builds upon over a decade of programming in Nigeria to implement a multiyear program that seeks to strengthen the capacity of Nigerian opinion leaders and policy makers, to foster sustainable and inclusive strategies toward addressing the root causes of violent conflict, particularly in Northern Nigeria. Some activities included (1) convening a 3-day symposium in Washington, D.C., of governors from states across northern Nigeria to foster key exchanges and critical discussions with leading American and international experts on the drivers of violent conflict in the region and how to resolve them; (2) creating a senior working group of 11 Nigerian civic leaders that can engage strategically with the governors and work collaboratively to articulate a set of policy priority areas toward addressing the drivers of conflict; (3) conducting quantitative and qualitative studies in Borno and Plateau states to understand citizen perceptions to the drivers of violent conflict, and how policymakers should address them; and (4) supporting sustained, facilitated engagement between the governors and members of the senior working group to help to shape a more inclusive policy platform toward preventing violent conflict and addressing stabilization needs in target states across the north. The goal of this project is to have an invested group of governors from across the northern states in Nigeria and a senior working group of civic leaders identify a set of citizen-informed priority policy areas for northern Nigeria to prevent and resolve violent conflict, increase stabilization efforts where appropriate, and demonstrate a continued willingness to engage together on specific conflict-related issues.
Network of Nigerian Facilitators	USIP's MEA is responsible for the Network of Nigerian Facilitators. USIP is identifying and supporting a group of community leaders, including youth, women, and religious leaders with dialogue facilitation skills to prepare, convene, and facilitate intergroup dialogues in their communities. In addition to building the abilities of the facilitators to locally manage conflict, USIP will provide financial support to the facilitators to implement localized conflict management activities. The goal is to build capacity and provide ongoing support to a network of community facilitators that can prevent and resolve conflict nonviolently.
Nigeria Conversation Series	USIP's MEA is responsible for the Nigeria Conversation Series. MEA partners with a local organization to implement the series and uses local staff for support. The series brings together a broad array of policy professionals for in-depth discussions on current issues in Nigeria and to explore options for preventing and resolving violent conflict in the country. The purpose of the series is to inform and influence Nigerian, U.S., and international policies and programs that seek to address conflict in Nigeria. The discussions seek to promote improved understanding and shared analysis of the conflict dynamics in the country through engagement with informed researchers and practitioners.

**Appendix V: USIP Reported Conflict
Prevention and Resolution Efforts for Iraq,
Nigeria, and Syria, Fiscal Year 2017**

Conflict prevention and resolution effort	USIP's description of effort and its goals
Nigeria's Imam and Pastor: Faith at the Front	USIP's MEA is responsible for Nigeria's Imam and Pastor project. In fiscal year 2017, the findings from USIP research were used to inform the production of a short USIP video to contribute to understanding (1) the role of religious leaders in peacebuilding and (2) that grassroots dialogues are necessary for reducing violence but are complemented by changes in governance. Also, USIP produced a video series of pieces to highlight the work and voices of USIP's country and partner organizations and provide practical tools to inform policymakers and partners in their work in reducing violent conflict.
Research on Violent Extremism, Politics, Religion, and the Higher Education Sector in the Lake Chad Basin	USIP's ACT, with funding from and in partnership with USAID, is responsible for the Research on Violent Extremism, Politics, Religion, and the Higher Education Sector in the Lake Chad Basin effort. Under the rubric of the RESOLVE Network—a global consortium of research organizations established by USIP—this project is intended to enhance USAID's assistance to the educational sector in the Lake Chad Basin region by providing research support for locally driven analysis in Nigeria, Chad, and Cameroon. The primary purpose of the RESOLVE Network initiative in the Lake Chad Basin is to assess the role of the state, civil society, and other nonstate actors in shaping the political divides over the role of religion in education and community and state responses to extremism in Chad, Nigeria, and Cameroon.
Support to State Peacebuilding Institutions	USIP's MEA is responsible for the Support to State Peacebuilding Institutions effort, which is being implemented by a local partner with the support of local USIP staff in Abuja. The Africa Team, in partnership with USIP's ACT, provides training for the Plateau Peacebuilding Agency, the Kaduna Peace Commission and the relevant peacebuilding entities in the Borno state administration on conflict analysis, conflict management and facilitation. USIP delivers the training through a combination of online and in-person training. The Africa team identifies ways to engage the Interfaith Mediation Center (the Imam and the Pastor) to share their expertise and experiences. The goal is to advance the skills of the practitioner peacebuilding community in Nigeria to inform policy to prevent and resolve conflict at the state-level through online and in-person training.
Supporting Transition to Civilian-Led Governance and Security	USIP's MEA is responsible for the Supporting Transition to Civilian-Led Governance and Security effort, which is being implemented by a local partner with the support of local USIP staff in Abuja. The Africa team developed a framework for the transition from military and vigilante security to community-oriented policing through (1) research on comparative experiences in the transition from nonstate actors to civilian governance and (2) a series of roundtables and engagements with The Multinational Joint Task Force. The research seeks to incorporate USIP's experiences in Afghanistan, Iraq, Colombia, Nepal, and Myanmar to offer concrete lessons, tools, and approaches. The goal is to contribute evidence-based and comparative research that will inform discussions on civil-military relationships, justice, security, and rule of law reform in the Northeast and Lake Chad Basin.
Women Preventing Violent Extremism	USIP's MEA is responsible for the Women Preventing Violent Extremism effort, with funding from and in partnership with State's Bureau of Counterterrorism. The project is implemented by a local organization. This project began as a pilot project in 2012 and is designed to increase women's agency and influence in strengthening community-level resilience to violent extremism through engagement and collaboration with security actors. The project was piloted in Plateau and Kaduna states in Nigeria and in Nairobi, Mombasa, and Garissa, Kenya. The project aims to understand ways in which trust and cooperation between women in civil society and the security sector can best be fostered and supported.

**Appendix V: USIP Reported Conflict
Prevention and Resolution Efforts for Iraq,
Nigeria, and Syria, Fiscal Year 2017**

Conflict prevention and resolution effort	USIP's description of effort and its goals
Youth Leaders' Exchange with His Holiness the Dalai Lama	USIP's ACT is responsible for the Youth Leaders' Exchange with His Holiness the Dalai Lama. In November 2017, USIP and the Dalai Lama hosted a second annual dialogue with youth peacebuilders drawn from countries across Africa, including Nigeria; Asia; and the Middle East. Many of these countries face the world's deadliest conflicts, as well as campaigns by extremist groups to incite youth to violence. The youth leaders are among their countries' most effective peacebuilders. The dialogue with the Dalai Lama was intended to help them to build the practical skills and personal resilience they need to work against the tensions or violence in their homelands. The overarching goal was to strengthen the capacity of youth to create positive change as leaders and peacebuilders in their communities by partnering with more traditional leaders.
SYRIA	
Dialogues with Interfaith and Other Key Leaders	USIP's MEA is responsible for the Dialogues with the Interfaith and Other Key Leaders effort in partnership with and with funding from State's Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor. In Northeastern Syria, USIP works with Syrian partners to strengthen civil society's engagement and coordinating role with civic, religious, and tribal leaders in al-Qamishli/al-Qahtaniya. The effort aims to address drivers of tensions and conflicts through an evidenced-based, outcome-oriented dialogue process. The overall goal is to strengthen social cohesion among and between the communities in Northern Syria, enable the return of displaced communities, and stem potential conflict.
Syria Grants: Building Social Cohesion in Host Communities for Refugees	USIP's MEA is responsible for three ongoing grants related to the Syria conflict in neighboring countries: The first is a grant to War Child to work with a local network of Jordanian organizations training young Syrian refugees in Amman and vicinity on youth leadership, peacebuilding, and conflict resolution skills. The two other grants fund (1) a Lebanese civic group that supported mediation and training aimed at reducing refugee-related tensions in Lebanon's Bekaa Valley and to enable Syrian refugees to find jobs and register their children in schools, and (2) a nongovernmental organization that trained Syrian and Lebanese journalists on conflict-sensitive reporting about the Syrian refugee crisis and on raising awareness of the benefits the refugees bring to the host community. These grants are aimed at reducing tensions that threaten peace and stability in Lebanon and Jordan because of the burdens of their absorption of Syrian refugees.
Youth Leaders' Exchange with His Holiness the Dalai Lama	USIP's ACT was responsible for the Youth Leaders' Exchange with His Holiness the Dalai Lama. In November 2017, USIP and the Dalai Lama hosted a second annual dialogue with youth peacebuilders drawn from countries across Africa, Asia, and the Middle East, including Syria. Many of these countries face the world's deadliest conflicts, as well as campaigns by extremist groups to incite youth to violence. The youth leaders are among their countries' most effective peacebuilders. The dialogue with the Dalai Lama was intended to help them to build the practical skills and personal resilience they need to work against the tensions or violence in their homelands. The overarching goal was to strengthen the capacity of youth to create positive change as leaders and peacebuilders in their communities by partnering with more traditional leaders.

Source: GAO analysis of data and documents provided by USIP. | GAO-18-654

Notes: Although USIP generally refers to all of its work as "conflict prevention and resolution," USIP officials stated that all of USIP's efforts fit under the general umbrella of conflict prevention, mitigation, and stabilization and thus reported all of USIP's efforts abroad for Iraq, Nigeria, and Syria (and in neighboring countries for Syria) that were active in fiscal year 2017. USIP officials indicated that since the terms—conflict prevention, mitigation, and stabilization—are too general to have operational meaning, current formal definitions for these terms were not available in fiscal year 2017.

**Appendix V: USIP Reported Conflict
Prevention and Resolution Efforts for Iraq,
Nigeria, and Syria, Fiscal Year 2017**

We did not independently verify whether USIP's reported list of conflict mitigation and stabilization efforts included all such efforts in Iraq, Nigeria, and Syria (and in neighboring countries for Syria). For the purposes of this list of efforts and goals, "efforts" includes what our sources also referred to as "projects."

Countries for which USIP conducts efforts are shaded in gray.

³ISIS is also variously referred to as the Islamic State of Iraq and al-Sham, Daesh, and the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL).

Appendix VI: Comments from the Department of State



United States Department of State
Comptroller
Washington, DC 20520

August 29, 2018

Thomas Melito
Managing Director
International Affairs and Trade
Government Accountability Office
441 G Street, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20548-0001

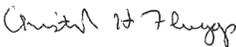
Dear Mr. Melito:

We appreciate the opportunity to review your draft report, "OVERSEAS CONFLICTS: Agencies Could Benefit from Documenting Agreement on Coordination for U.S. Stabilization Efforts GAO Job Code 102040.

The enclosed Department of State comments are provided for incorporation with this letter as an appendix to the final report.

If you have any questions concerning this response, please contact Victoria Ellis, Strategy Advisor, Office of Partnerships, Strategy, and Communications, Bureau of Conflict and Stabilization Operations at (202) 472-8604.

Sincerely,


Christopher H. Flagg

Enclosure:
As stated

cc: GAO – Jessica Farb
CSO – Pete Marocco
OIG - Norman Brown

Department of State Comments on GAO Draft Report

**OVERSEAS CONFLICTS: Agencies Could Benefit from Documenting
Agreement on Coordination for U.S. Stabilization Efforts**
(GAO 18-654, GAO Code 102040)

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on GAO's draft report "*Overseas Conflict: Agencies Could Benefit from Documenting Agreement on Coordination for U.S. Stabilization Efforts.*" The Department of State appreciates the GAO's recognition of its efforts to work with interagency counterparts to prevent and mitigate conflict and stabilize conflict-affected areas, especially in Iraq, Nigeria, and Syria. The GAO report reiterates a key finding of the Stabilization Assistance Review (SAR) by highlighting the importance of a collaborative interagency effort with clear roles and responsibilities. State, USAID, and DOD are committed to codifying agreed roles and responsibilities, where State is the lead for all stabilization efforts including setting stabilization policy, conducting planning to establish our overarching political strategy, and ensuring that all lines of effort within that plan are supporting political objectives. USAID is the lead implementer on non-security assistance, and DOD provides support, security, and reinforcements when appropriate. State, USAID, and DOD aim to develop a coordinated memorandum of agreement outlining these roles and responsibilities, and ensuring respective Departments and Agencies have the necessary structures in place to perform these roles.

As indicated in the report, the Department of State is also working closely with USAID and the Department of Defense on implementing the seven lines of effort outlined in the SAR and mainstreaming the core principles into policy and practice. We are working to ensure political strategies for priority conflict-affected countries and regions reflect the SAR's principles and that our regional bureaus and embassies have the tools and support they need to apply the SAR framework. In the coming year we will be applying the SAR principles in select focus countries and monitoring the implementation process. This will inform a final memorandum that will promote an integrated, agile approach to stabilizing conflict-affected areas.

Additionally, the SAR outlined the need to co-deploy civilian expertise with military elements to conflict-affected areas in order to improve civilian-military coordination. State, USAID, and DOD are currently developing a framework and risk management approach for stabilization-related co-deployment.

2

Although USIP is a valued implementing partner and invites government participation in its discussions on global conflict, it does not play a formal role in national security policy processes with State, USAID, and DOD. This GAO report should clarify this distinction to avoid diminishing the importance of the policy-making role and providing equal weight to non-governmental efforts with regard to stabilization. Such a distinction is critical in light of the report's recommendations, and those of the SAR, to ensure clarity in roles and responsibilities on stabilization efforts.

Lastly, the Bureau of Conflict and Stabilization Operations, like the rest of the Department, is interested in ensuring effective stewardship of taxpayer dollars, to include preventing the distribution of funds to malign actors and terrorist groups in conflict-affected areas. Mandatory program-level risk assessments occur prior to funding allocation to review dynamics on the ground and determine precautionary measures and activities safeguarding the flow of dollars.

The Department of State agrees with GAO's recommendations.

Appendix VII: Comments from the U.S. Agency for International Development



SEP 04 2018

Jessica Farb
Director, International Affairs and Trade
United States Government Accountability Office
441 G Street, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20548

Re: OVERSEAS CONFLICTS: Agencies Could Benefit from Documenting Agreement on Coordination for U.S. Stabilization Efforts (GAO-18-654)

Dear Ms. Farb:

I am pleased to provide the formal response of the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) to the draft report of the U. S. Government Accountability Office (GAO) entitled, "OVERSEAS CONFLICTS: Agencies Could Benefit from Documenting Agreement on Coordination for U.S. Stabilization Efforts" (GAO-18-654).

USAID appreciates the GAO's recognition of its efforts to work as an effective interagency team to address the prevention and mitigation of conflict and stabilization—especially in Iraq, Nigeria, and Syria. USAID has a long history of coordinating and planning, both informally and formally, with the Departments of State (State) and Defense (DoD) to maximize both the efficiency and effectiveness of investments to achieve our national security and foreign-policy objectives. USAID also recognizes the efforts of the U.S. Institute for Peace (USIP) as a key partner to analyze and implement critical elements of reconciliation and conflict-prevention programs.

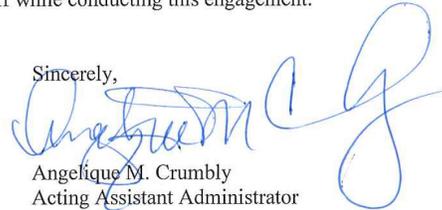
Most recently, USAID is working closely with both State and DoD on implementing the seven lines of effort outlined in the Stabilization Assistance Review (SAR), and mainstreaming the SAR's core principles into policy and practice. Accordingly, USAID, State, and DoD are working together to ensure that the interagency strategies and assistance plans for priority conflict-affected countries and regions reflect the principles in the SAR. We are also working to ensure that our Country Teams at the U.S. Embassies in those places have the tools and support they need to apply the SAR framework.

As part of implementing the SAR, USAID, State, and DoD are committed to codifying our agreed roles and responsibilities by developing a coordinated Memorandum of Agreement to outline the agency roles and responsibilities of each by September 2019, and ensuring they have the necessary structures in place to perform these roles. We will apply the SAR's principles in select focus countries over the coming year and monitor the process on implementation, to inform the final Memorandum so we can collectively promote an integrated, agile approach to stabilizing conflict-affected areas.

**Appendix VII: Comments from the U.S. Agency
for International Development**

I am transmitting this letter and the enclosed comments for incorporation as an appendix to the GAO's final report. Thank you for the opportunity to respond to your draft report, and for the courtesies extended by your staff while conducting this engagement.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Angelique M. Crumbly", is written over the typed name and title.

Angelique M. Crumbly
Acting Assistant Administrator
Bureau for Management

Enclosure: a/s

Appendix VIII: Comments from the Department of Defense

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SPECIAL OPERATIONS /
LOW INTENSITY CONFLICT

ASSISTANT SECRETARY OF DEFENSE
2500 DEFENSE PENTAGON
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20301-2500

SEP 04 2018

Ms. Jessica Farb
Director, International Affairs and Trade
U.S. Government Accountability Office (GAO)
441 G Street, NW
Washington, DC 20548

Dear Ms. Farb,

Thank you for providing GAO report 18-654 for review and comment. The Department of Defense (DoD) acknowledges and concurs with the recommended executive action to work with the Department of State (DOS) and the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) to document our interagency coordination for U.S. stabilization efforts through formal written guidance and agreements that address key collaboration practices.

In 2018, DoD worked closely with DOS and USAID to develop the Stabilization Assistance Review (SAR). The Secretary of State, Secretary of Defense, and USAID Administrator endorsed the SAR to formalize coordination, roles and responsibilities, and a common definition of stabilization. DoD is currently implementing the SAR recommendations in coordination with DOS and USAID. DoD is also updating *DoD Directive 3000.05 – Stabilization* which incorporates the common definition of stabilization and reinforces the SAR recommendations. DoD is also working with DOS and USAID to develop a global Memorandum of Agreement to enable forward deployment of interagency civilians to better synchronize U.S. stabilization efforts. In addition, DoD, DOS, and USAID recently endorsed the interagency plan for conflict prevention and stabilization in coordination with the National Security Council staff.

Thank you again for the opportunity to review and provide comment on the draft report. My point of contact is COL Jason Taliaferro at 703-692-0759 or jason.c.taliaferro.mil@mail.mil.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Owen West".

Owen West



UNCLASSIFIED

Appendix IX: Comments from the U.S. Institute of Peace



UNITED STATES INSTITUTE OF PEACE

August 30, 2018

Jessica Farb
Director, International Affairs and Trade
U.S. Government Accountability Office
441 G Street, N.W.
Washington, DC 20548

Dear Ms. Farb,

Thank you for the opportunity to review and comment on the draft report titled *“Overseas Conflicts: Agencies Could Benefit from Documenting Agreement on Coordination for U.S. Stabilization Efforts”* (GAO-18-654). In this report, GAO presented findings regarding collaboration on America’s conflict prevention, mitigation, and stabilization efforts in Iraq, Nigeria, and Syria in fiscal year 2017. We appreciate your thorough analysis of a topic critical to U.S. national security.

USIP is committed to applying its distinct mission, expertise, and independent status in ways useful to interagency partners and in support of national security objectives. The Institute appreciates the recognition from State, DOD, and USAID in the report that USIP “plays a valuable, unique, and helpful role given its status as an independent organization, its specialized expertise, its ability to convene interagency actors in a non-official setting, and its ability to build local relationships through a continuous, field-based presence in certain countries.”

USIP is committed to continued close coordination with interagency partners on priorities and specific ways in which the Institute can bring to bear its distinct expertise, deep local networks in conflict zones, and independent status.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Nancy Lindborg'.

Nancy Lindborg
President, U.S. Institute of Peace

2301 CONSTITUTION AVENUE, NW WASHINGTON, DC 20037
TEL 202-457-1700 • FAX 202-429-6063 • WEB www.usip.org

Appendix X: GAO Contact and Staff Acknowledgments

GAO Contact

Jessica Farb, (202) 512-7114, or farbj@gao.gov

Staff Acknowledgments

In addition to the individual named above, Godwin Agbara (Assistant Director), Kathleen Monahan (Analyst-in-Charge), David Dayton, Martin de Alteriis, Mark Dowling, Emily Gupta, and Jasmine Senior made key contributions to this report. Additional assistance was provided by Michael Fahy, Christopher Koblitis, Judith McCloskey, James Reynolds, Kira Self, and Sarah Veale.

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