

Statement by the Embassy of the Republic of Iraq to the United States regarding H.R. 1654

The Committee on Foreign Affairs of the U.S. House of Representatives has scheduled a meeting on Wednesday, December 9, 2015, to consider H.R. 1654, a bill to “authorize the direct provision of defense articles, defense services, and related training to the Kurdistan Regional Government.”

The Embassy issued the following statement in response:

“The bill to be considered by the Foreign Affairs Committee would authorize the U.S. President to provide military assistance directly to the Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG). This legislation is in fact a little different from a provision of the National Defense Authorization Act that President Obama signed into law two weeks ago. That legislation also authorized—but did not require—the U.S. President to directly arm Kurdish forces in certain circumstances. The Obama Administration has made clear that it has no intention of exercising that authority, and we are confident the same would remain true if this new legislation were also enacted into law.

Even if the Foreign Affairs Committee approves this legislation, it must travel a long path in order to be enacted into law. In addition to being approved by the Foreign Affairs Committee, it would have to pass the full U.S. House of Representatives, the Senate Foreign Relations Committee and the full U.S. Senate, which for bills of this nature typically occurs only by unanimous vote of the Senate. As a final step, President Obama would have to sign the bill into law.

The fact that this legislation is both largely duplicative of current U.S. law and unlikely to be enacted suggests that it is being considered primarily for reasons of political symbolism. This is regrettable, because the focus of all Iraqis and our allies at this time needs to be on defeating Daesh. Promoting artificial divisions among Iraqis can only distract from the struggle against our common enemy. The Embassy is engaged with the all participants in the U.S. legislative process to make sure they understand that the Government of Iraq considers this legislation unwise and unnecessary.”