

SUPPORT LEGISLATION TO ARM THE KURDS
A Critical Partner in the Fight against ISIL is Outgunned

“The Kurds need U.S. weapons fast. In particular, they need armored personnel carriers and Humvees to protect their troops, tanks to repel enemy advances, night vision goggles to detect sneak attacks and small attack helicopters to defend a front that stretches 600 miles.” The Kurdish request “seems reasonable, given the crucial role the Peshmerga have played in this fight.” David Ignatius, 2/11/15

Dear Colleague:

We invite you to help speed the flow of U.S. weapons to our Kurdish partners by cosponsoring a bipartisan bill that would provide temporary authority for the President to provide military assistance directly to Kurdish “Peshmerga” forces fighting ISIL in Iraq. This legislation is largely similar to H.R. 5747, which we introduced late in the last Congress.

Supporting local forces on the ground is central to the coalition effort to “degrade and ultimately destroy” ISIL. At 190,000 strong, Iraqi Kurdish “Peshmerga” forces have proven to be an effective ground force currently combating ISIL. However, Iraqi Kurds are fighting along a 650-mile front, handicapped by inadequate light weapons.

It is in the U.S. interest to strengthen the military capability of the Iraqi Kurds by accelerating the delivery of the heavy weapons and armored vehicles needed to effectively fight ISIL. The U.S. thus far has provided limited “resupply” of light weapons to Iraqi Kurds, but only after Baghdad signs off on every shipment. Meanwhile, U.S. plans to train and equip three new Kurdish brigades for counteroffensive operations are in their infancy.

In addition this legislation:

- Makes it the policy of the U.S. to provide direct assistance to the Kurdistan Regional Government to combat ISIL, and identifies Iraqi Kurds as a reliable and stable partner of the United States.
- Recognizes that the Peshmerga are the official security force of the Kurdistan Regional Government, organized in accordance with the Iraqi Constitution.
- Finds that defeating ISIL is critical to maintaining an inclusive, unified Iraq.
- Emphasizes that ISIL is a significant terrorist threat that is armed with heavy weapons.
- Maintains existing Congressional oversight of significant arms transfers and requires appropriate end-use requirements for defense articles transferred to the Kurds.
- Sunsets after three years, in recognition of the emergency nature of this authority.