



CONGRESSIONAL BUDGET OFFICE COST ESTIMATE

June 20, 2017

S. 905 **Syrian War Crimes Accountability Act of 2017**

*As ordered reported by the Senate Committee on Foreign Relations
on May 25, 2017*

S. 905 would require the Department of State to report to the Congress on several aspects of the war in Syria, including war crimes, genocide, or crimes against humanity and on assistance programs to ensure that the perpetrators of such crimes are held accountable. The department also would be required to complete a study and report on the feasibility and desirability of options for transitional justice (measures to promote peace and justice in countries transitioning out of armed conflict or repression). Finally, S. 905 would authorize the department to provide assistance to entities investigating war-related crimes in Syria, to offer rewards for information leading to arrests or convictions for such crimes, and to support transitional justice in Syria.

The Department of State currently provides assistance to entities that are investigating and preserving evidence of war crimes in Syria. While it is possible that the department would increase such assistance under the bill, CBO has no basis for estimating such additional amounts. In addition, CBO has no basis for estimating when or in what form the department would provide additional assistance for transitional justice.

Under the War Crimes Rewards Program, the department uses appropriated funds to offer cash awards of up to \$5 million for information leading to the arrest or conviction of individuals accused of war crimes, genocide, or crimes against humanity. S. 905 would expand that program to include crimes committed in Syria. However, CBO has no basis for estimating whether implementing that provision would have discretionary costs because we cannot determine whether the department would offer awards under this authority, or how many, or when such awards might be paid.

CBO estimates that implementing S. 905 would cost less than \$500,000 over the 2018-2022 period for the required study and reports; such spending would be subject to the availability of appropriated funds.

Enacting S. 905 would not affect direct spending or revenues; therefore, pay-as-you-go procedures do not apply. CBO estimates that enacting S. 905 would not increase net direct spending or on-budget deficits in any of the four consecutive 10-year periods beginning in 2028.

S. 905 contains no intergovernmental or private-sector mandates as defined in the Unfunded Mandates Reform Act and would not affect the budgets of state, local, or tribal governments.

On May 9, 2017, CBO transmitted a cost estimate for H.R. 1677 as ordered reported by the House Committee on Foreign Affairs on May 3, 2017. Section 303 of H.R. 1677 authorizing assistance to entities carrying out investigative and forensic work in Syria is similar to section 7 in S. 905 and in both estimates CBO determined it had no basis for estimating whether or not the Department of State would increase assistance.

The CBO staff contact for this estimate is Sunita D'Monte. The estimate was approved by H. Samuel Papenfuss, Deputy Assistant Director for Budget Analysis.