

Iraq Situation Report: December 1, 2014

1 On December 1, ISIS launched an attack on the ISF near the al-Walid border crossing on the Iraqi-Syrian border near the town of Rutba in Western Anbar. Reporting is not clear regarding whether the attack targeted the Walid crossing itself or an ISF position nearby. One report indicated that ISIS launched an attack on the headquarters of the Fourth Brigade of the Border Guards near the crossing. Reportedly, 20 ISIS members and 15 to 17 border guards were killed in the clashes and five others were wounded. Subsequent reporting indicated that the guards at the al-Walid crossing were running out of ammunition and that ISIS captured four while 21 others remain surrounded by ISIS.



2 On December 1, Iraqi Army and Iraqi Police forces clashed with ISIS in the Huz area in Ramadi city in Anbar province and in Schariya, east of Ramadi. The clashes killed 14 ISIS members and the IA destroyed three ISIS "headquarters" and an unspecified number of ISIS vehicles.



3 Local Mosul sources reported that a coalition "drone" targeted ISIS members in three homes previously occupied by Iraqi Christians. The attacks reportedly killed 28 ISIS members and injured 14 others in addition to destroying vehicles and other equipment.



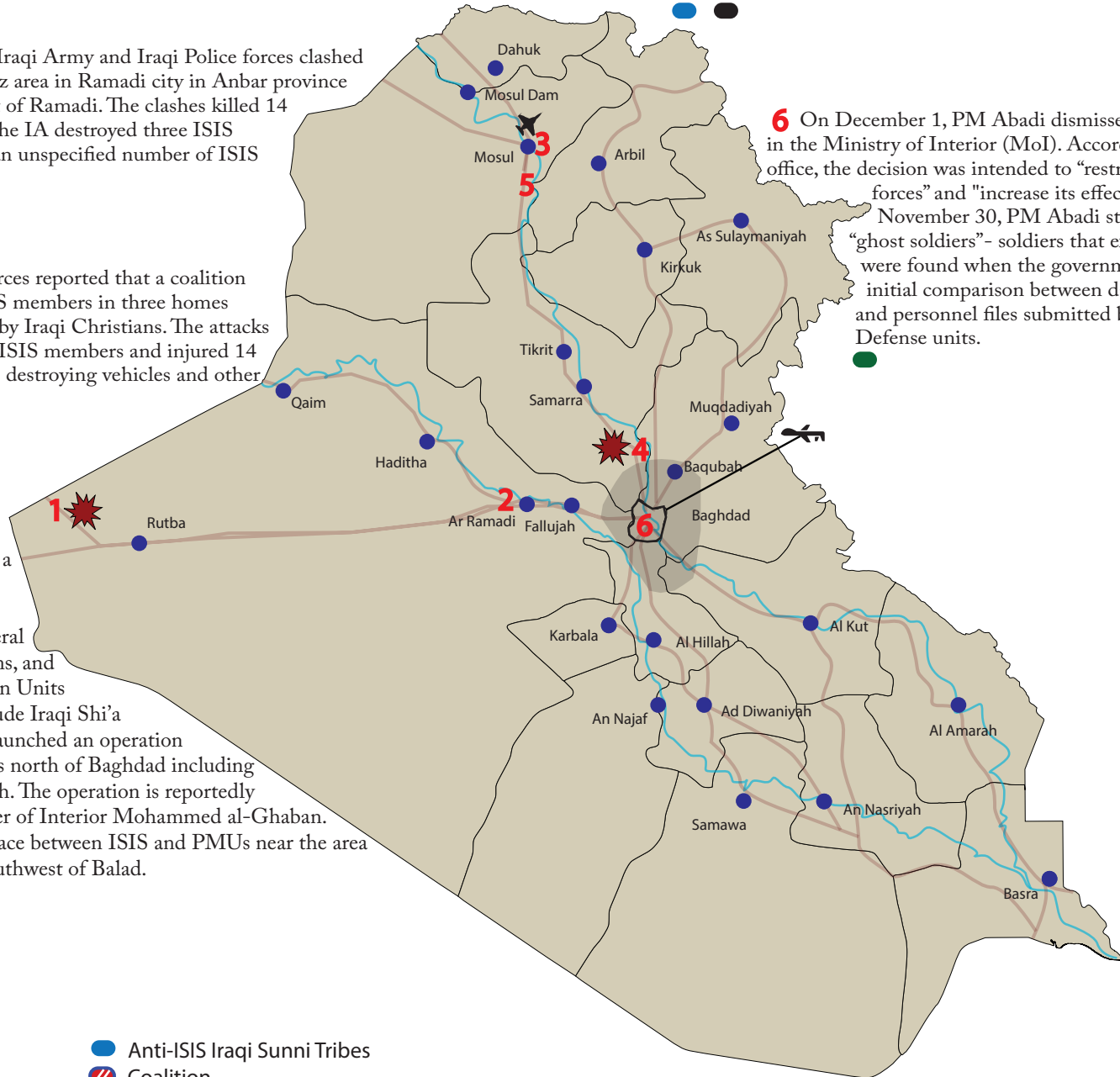
4 On December 1, a combined force of seven mechanized battalions, four Federal Police (FP) battalions, and Popular Mobilization Units (PMUs) which include Iraqi Shi'a militias reportedly launched an operation to clear ISIS in areas north of Baghdad including Balad and Dhuluiyah. The operation is reportedly being led by Minister of Interior Mohammed al-Ghaban. Clashes also took place between ISIS and PMUs near the area of Sayed Gharib, southwest of Balad.



5 On December 1, the Jubur and Sabawyin tribes in the villages of Tal al-Rim and Sultan Abdullah and the Qayarra area, south of Mosul in Ninewa province, reportedly initiated firefights with the Islamic State of Iraq and al-Sham (ISIS) and expressed support for Iraqi Security Forces (ISF) and Iraqi Kurdish Peshmerga. Iraqi Sunni tribes in the areas of Shura and Hamam al-Alil, south of Mosul, also reportedly expressed support to the ISF and Peshmerga. On November 30, PM Haidar al-Abadi reportedly signed an order to form a new military operations command to "liberate Ninewa."



6 On December 1, PM Abadi dismissed 24 senior figures in the Ministry of Interior (MoI). According to Abadi's office, the decision was intended to "restructure the security forces" and "increase its effectiveness." On November 30, PM Abadi stated that 50,000 "ghost soldiers" - soldiers that exist only in records - were found when the government performed an initial comparison between databases of salaries and personnel files submitted by Ministry of Defense units.



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The Islamic State of Iraq and al-Sham (ISIS) is seeking to reverse the momentum in northern Iraq and maintain its aggressive posture in the western parts of the country. To that end, ISIS is launching attacks in the area between Baghdad and Samarra to the north of the capital. This geographic stretch encompasses the beginning of the vital Baghdad-Mosul highway and is also home to the strategic Balad airbase and Camp Taji which are a major Iraqi Security Forces (ISF) and Popular Mobilization Units (PMUs) staging grounds. Given this significance, ISIS is seeking to regain the momentum it has lost in the area in addition to disrupting the highway which also leads to Samarra where ISF and PMUs have been garrisoned since June of this year in the immediate aftermath of the fall of Mosul. It is also likely that these ISIS operations are intended to prevent any future operations against the city of Tikrit and to isolate ISF and PMUs who are currently in control of Baiji. All of these northern developments can also be connected to ISIS operations in Kirkuk where ISIS continues to engage Iraqi Kurdish Peshmerga forces. There are unconfirmed reports that tribes south of Mosul are rising against ISIS. These reports remain tenuous, but they may push ISIS to increase its harsh measures against any possible tribal resistance. In the west, ISIS is still pursuing its objective of pressuring security forces in the province. ISIS has attacked forces near the al-Walid border crossing which is on the Iraqi-Syrian border near the town of Rutba in western Anbar. In light of the November 24 ISIS SVBIED attack near the Trebil border crossing with Jordan, this attack may indicate that ISIS intends to capture the two border crossings.