

Iraq Situation Report: January 24-26, 2015

1 On January 24, the Peshmerga clashed with ISIS in the Iski Mosul area, located, northeast of Tal Afar, killing an unspecified number of ISIS members. The source did not report Peshmerga casualties.

2 On January 24, ISIS detonated IEDs targeting the Sabuniya Bridge, located 10 miles northwest of Mosul. The blast caused “severe” damage to the bridge.

3 On January 26, security forces in Ramadi imposed a curfew on the city in preparation for an operation to clear the city of ISIS. Following the announcement of the curfew, security forces reportedly advanced in the Houz neighborhood, southern Ramadi, and Tamim neighborhood, just south of Ramadi across the river. Forces also advanced in Albu Ali al-Jasim, northwest of Ramadi, and Jazeera, also located outside of the city. The source added that the operation is ongoing and that security forces had destroyed seven ISIS vehicles and killed an ISIS leader and four of his aides.

4 On January 26, security forces, most likely ISF and Iraqi Sunni anti-ISIS tribes, launched an operation to clear ISIS from the Sjariya area, east of Ramadi, and imposed a curfew in the area. The source added that the operation is supported by coalition airstrikes.

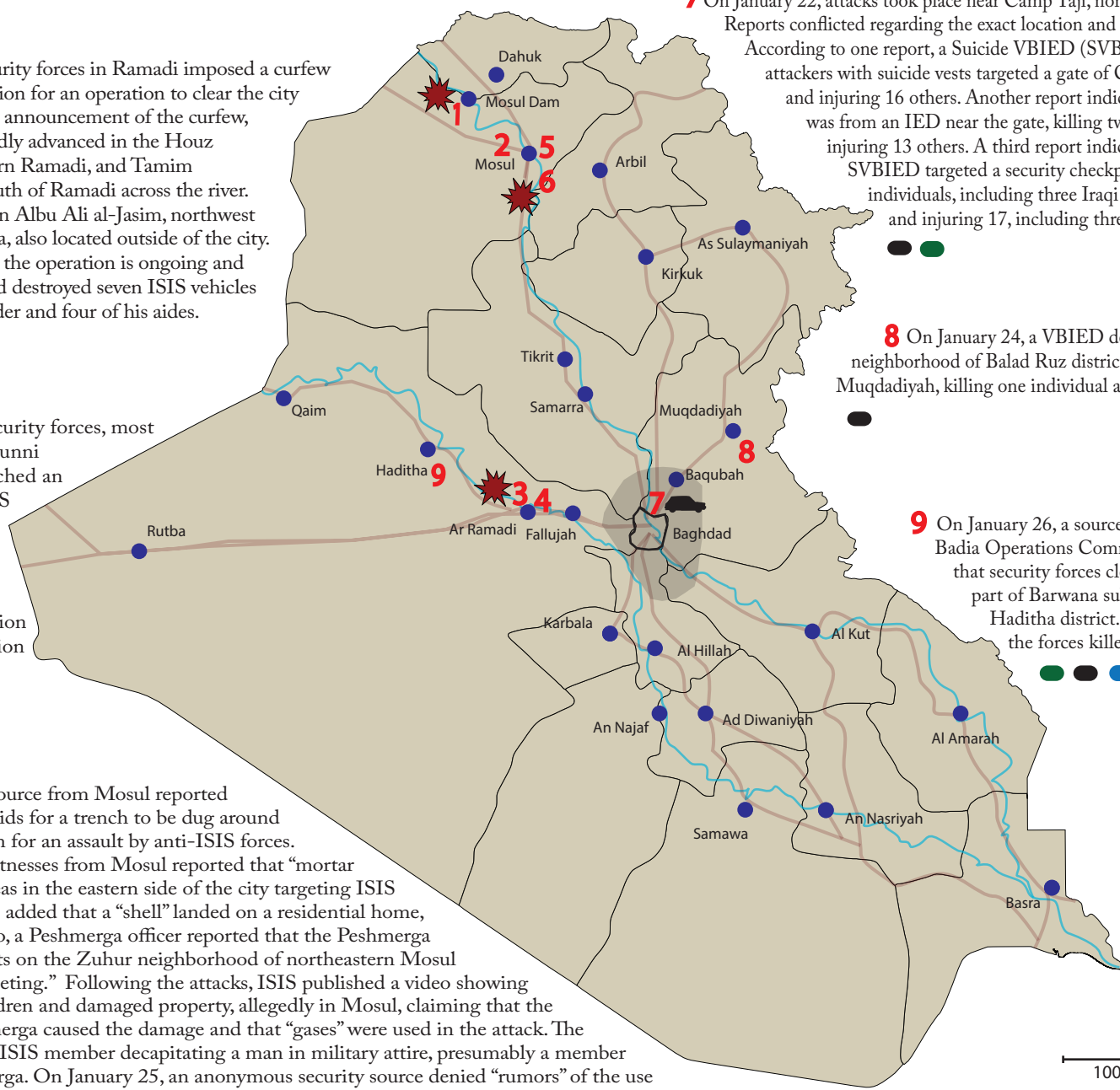
5 On January 22, a source from Mosul reported that ISIS is seeking bids for a trench to be dug around the city in preparation for an assault by anti-ISIS forces. On January 23, eyewitnesses from Mosul reported that “mortar rounds” landed on areas in the eastern side of the city targeting ISIS positions. The sources added that a “shell” landed on a residential home, injuring civilians. Also, a Peshmerga officer reported that the Peshmerga fired 20 “Grad” rockets on the Zuhur neighborhood of northeastern Mosul targeting an ISIS “meeting.” Following the attacks, ISIS published a video showing dead and injured children and damaged property, allegedly in Mosul, claiming that the shelling by the Peshmerga caused the damage and that “gases” were used in the attack. The video also showed an ISIS member decapitating a man in military attire, presumably a member of the ISF or Peshmerga. On January 25, an anonymous security source denied “rumors” of the use of “chlorine gas.” He stated that the “odors” were the result of the leakage of chlorine from a water treatment plant struck by mortars. On January 26, Bashar al-Kiki, chairman of Ninewa provincial council, stated that President of Iraqi Kurdistan Masoud Barazani ordered the Peshmerga to stop the shelling of areas within Mosul city. Kiki added that President Barazani accused ISIS of using civilians as “human shields.”

6 On January 25, ISIS launched a “wide” attack on Peshmerga positions in the Sultan Abdullah area and Tal al-Rim Village, both located southeast of Mosul on the eastern side of the Tigris. The Peshmerga reportedly repelled the attack, killing and injuring “dozens” of ISIS fighters.

7 On January 22, attacks took place near Camp Taji, north of Baghdad. Reports conflicted regarding the exact location and type of attacks. According to one report, a Suicide VBIED (SVBIED) and two attackers with suicide vests targeted a gate of Camp Taji, killing six and injuring 16 others. Another report indicated that the blast was from an IED near the gate, killing two soldiers and injuring 13 others. A third report indicated that a single SVBIED targeted a security checkpoint, killing eight individuals, including three Iraqi Army (IA) members, and injuring 17, including three IA members.

8 On January 24, a VBIED detonated in the Sinaa neighborhood of Balad Ruz district, southeast of Muqdadiah, killing one individual and injuring four others.

9 On January 26, a source from Jazeera and Badia Operations Command (JBOC) stated that security forces cleared the southern part of Barwana sub-district, south of Haditha district. The source added that the forces killed 22 ISIS members.



100km



- Major Cities
- ✖ Airstrikes
- ✖ Execution
- Unknown Gunmen
- Iraqi Shi'a militias
- ✖ Major Clash
- ✖ SVBIED
- ISF
- Anti-ISIS Iraqi Sunni Tribes
- Peshmerga
- ✖ Armed Drones
- ✖ Kidnapping
- ISIS
- ✖ Coalition

Content: ISW Iraq Team
Graphics: John Sauerhoff

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The Iraqi Security Forces and the Peshmerga on one side and ISIS on the other side are all setting conditions for a future operation that aims to dislodge ISIS from Mosul. U.S. and Iraqi officials have signalled that such an assault on the city will take place in the months ahead. The operations of the Peshmerga near Mosul appear to be setting the conditions for this assault by contesting areas outside the city. For example, the Peshmerga continued their offensive conditions-setting operation west of Mosul by attacking Iski Mosul village, northeast of Tal Afar, likely to prevent ISIS from using the village as a launching pad for a counter-attack to reverse the recent gains achieved by the Peshmerga on January 21st. In response to these advances, ISIS launched an attack on the Peshmerga in the areas of Tal al-Rim and Sultan Ali, southeast of Mosul, both considered the first line of defense for Iraqi Kurdistan due to their proximity to Arbil. ISIS likely intended to force the KRG to divert resources away from the front west of Mosul. ISIS also severely damaged the Sabuniya Bridge, located on the road that leads to the western entrance of Mosul, in order to prevent anti-ISIS forces from using that route as an avenue of approach for a future assault on the city. ISIS is reportedly seeking to dig a trench around the city for the same purpose. ISIS has almost certainly taken more defensive measures in and around Mosul since it took control of the city in June 2014, although reports about such measures have been recently on the rise. The Kurdish forces are unlikely to be the tip of the spear for the assault into Mosul, but rather aim to set conditions for that operation by clearing areas nearby. Despite repeated statements from Iraqi officials about a nearing assault, Baghdad is allocating effective ISF units to other fronts that need immediate protection like Ramadi, Baghdad, the Baghdad Belts, Haditha, and Diyala, in some cases cooperating with the militias. This disparity between stated priorities and actions likely signals the competition between requirements for the defense of Baghdad and the offensive against Mosul. It also likely suggests that the timeline for clearing the city is months, rather than weeks.