

# Iraq Situation Report: January 27-28, 2015

**1** On January 28, Col. Shaban al-Obeidi, commander of the emergency battalion in al-Baghdadi sub-district, northwest of Hit district, stated that ISF had recaptured Juba village, north of al-Baghdadi sub-district, with the support of local police, tribal fighters from the Obaid tribe, and international coalition airstrikes. DoD stated that an airstrike near al-Asad airbase targeted an ISIS "tactical unit" and destroyed two buildings.



**2** On January 26, Vice President Osama al-Nujaifi stated that Iraqi Sunni tribal fighters who fought alongside the ISF and "forces fighting ISIS" in clearing operations in northern Diyala reported to him that those forces had destroyed homes and mosques. On January 27, Governor of Diyala Amir al-Majmai stated that unidentified gunmen killed 70 individuals in the village of Barwana, located north of the main area of Muqdadiah district. He called for an investigation into this matter. Both reports were strongly denied both by the Badr Organization and by the commander of Dijla Operations Command (DOC), General Abdul-Amir al-Zaidi, who both claimed that ISIS was responsible.



**3** On January 26, the local government of Diyala reported that water resumed flowing through the Sudur dam following its recapture from ISIS by ISF and Iraqi Shi'a militias.



**4** On January 28, chairman of Diyala Provincial Council Adnan al-Tamimi spoke about the plan for resettling residents of the areas north of Muqdadiah after they fled the area due to military operations. He highlighted that "there is no hurry" to resettle those residents back in their villages and that the dismantling of IEDs must be accomplished first. Second, he stated that many of these families supported ISIS and that a plan to resettle them must include a close examination of their identities to prevent ISIS from re-establishing a presence. He added that these "recommendations" were submitted to the government and "security commands."



**5** Anbar provincial council member Sadiq Jamil stated that a force from Shi'a militia Kata'ib Hezbollah (KH) entered the al-Sjariya area, east of Ramadi, upon "our request." A source from KH stated that KH had deployed its indirect fire capabilities in support of ISF and tribal operations in Sjariya, adding that shelling targeted ISIS in the "outskirts and center" of Sjariya. Also, Deputy Chairman of Anbar Provincial Council Falih al-Issawi praised KH capabilities and affirmed that their forces participated in Ramadi operations. He stated that manpower issues had necessitated the participation of "Shi'a forces." An anonymous Anbar Operations Command source said that ISF killed five ISIS members and an ISIS leader in addition to destroying seven ISIS vehicles, adding that clashes remain ongoing in southern and northern Ramadi.



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

**6** On January 26, an anonymous security source in Kirkuk province said that international coalition airstrikes targeted five ISIS positions used to train and equip suicide bombers in Zab sub-district and Mount Makhul, north of Baiji. The strikes reportedly killed 19 ISIS members.



**7** On January 27, Iraqi Army and Iraqi Police forces supported by Popular Mobilization Units (PMUs) clashed with "dozens of gunmen" in the hills east of Mansouriya, north of Muqdadiah, killing 22 "terrorists."



**8** On January 27, an aircraft owned by the UAE airline FlyDubai was struck by gunfire as it was landing in Baghdad International Airport (BIAP) resulting in minor damage to the body of the plane. Reports of injuries are conflicted, with some sources reporting one or two passengers lightly wounded. This incident prompted Transportation Minister Baqir Jabur to take a short flight over the airport accompanied by reporters to assure the world that Iraqi airspace is safe. Some airlines cancelled or postponed their trips to BIAP, including Jordanian and Turkish airlines, according to an anonymous source from the airport. A spokesperson for FlyDubai stated that flights to Arbil and Basra will continue and those to BIAP will resume "once operational conditions permit."

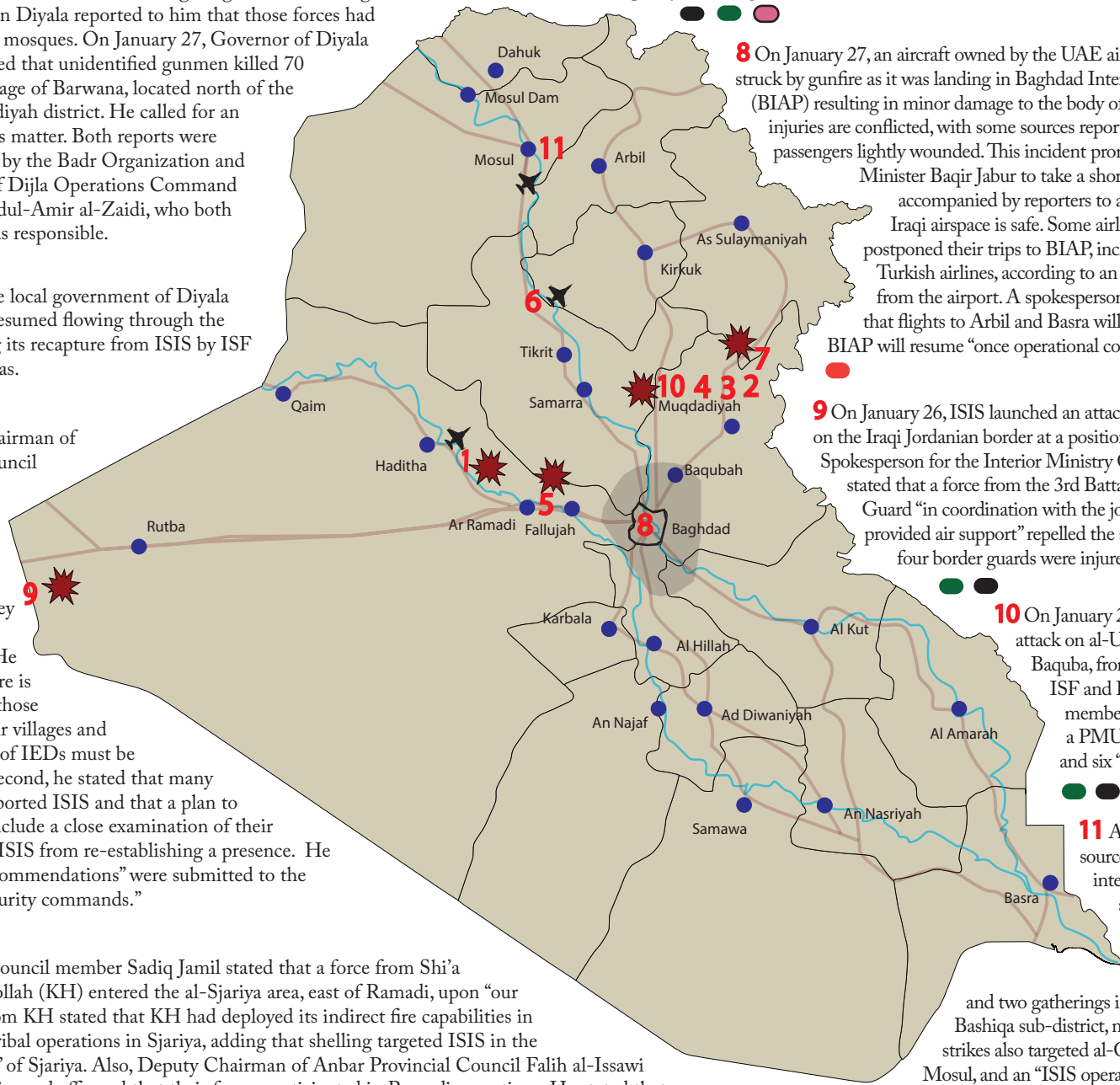
**9** On January 26, ISIS launched an attack on Iraqi border guards on the Iraqi Jordanian border at a position called "Arkaban." Spokesperson for the Interior Ministry General Saad Maan stated that a force from the 3rd Battalion of the 4th Border Guard "in coordination with the joint operations that provided air support" repelled the attack. He added that four border guards were injured in the attack.



**10** On January 28, ISIS launched an attack on al-Udhaim dam, north of Baquba, from "multiple directions." ISF and PMUs killed seven ISIS members. Two ISF soldiers and a PMU member were killed, and six "others" were wounded.



**11** An anonymous "local" source in Ninewa said that international coalition airstrikes targeted ISIS gatherings with "more than" 10 missiles in central Mosul and two gatherings in the al-Nuran area of Bashiqa sub-district, northeast of Mosul. The strikes also targeted al-Ghizalani base, south of Mosul, and an "ISIS operations center in central Mosul." DoD reported that two airstrikes destroyed two checkpoints, six "shipping containers," and four ISIS "fighting positions" near Mosul.



Content: Sinan Adnan and ISW Iraq Team  
Graphics: John Sauerhoff

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The influence of Iran and the militias it backs is expanding to western Iraq. Operations by Iraqi Shi'a militia Kata'ib Hezbollah (KH) has expanded to areas in Anbar province where such militias have not previously adopted such an offensive posture. Militias such as KH, Asa'ib Ahl al-Haq (AAH), and Kata'ib al-Imam Ali (KIA) are distinguished by their high effectiveness compared to other Iraqi Shi'a volunteers and less effective militias both working with and independent of the ISF to combat ISIS. KH, AAH, and KIA in particular have strong ties to the Iranian government. So far, their areas of operations have been limited to the defense of holy shrines, the defense of Baghdad, and forward deployments to fight ISIS in areas of importance to the Iraqi Shi'a and Iran. The farthest west militias have played a prominent role in the fight against ISIS thus far is the environs of Fallujah in defense of Baghdad. The deployment of KH to Sjariya in Anbar upon the request of the local Anbari government illustrates the desperate need of the Anbaris for manpower and military support. This deployment comes after the U.S. Government refused direct support without prior approval from Baghdad. Early signs of this expansion of militia operations appeared when Abu Mahdi al-Muhandis, a strong Iranian ally and a major figure within the sphere of Iraqi Shi'a militias, was reported to have visited Anbar on January 1 and met with tribal leaders. On January 14, KH reported that Commander of Anbar Operations Command (AOC) General Qassim al-Muhamadi visited KH's headquarters in northern Babil and delivered a message from Anbari leaders calling for support. KH also reported on January 16 that 30 Anbari leaders visited the same HQ for the same purpose. If KH continues to play an offensive role in Anbar, they may be successful in generating momentum against ISIS in Anbar where ISIS has largely set the conditions of battle since January of 2014. Meanwhile, operations launched by the ISF and militias last Friday to clear ISIS from areas of northern Diyala appear to have expelled ISIS from its last stronghold in the province. The Hamrin region will, however, likely remain an area where ISIS enjoys at least limited freedom of movement given the difficult terrain.