

Iraq Situation Report: January 8-9, 2015

1 On January 8, ISIS launched two major attacks on areas east and west of Samarra district in northern Salah ad-Din Province in addition to mortars on the district. In the Hwesh area, west of Samarra, one or two SVBIED(s) detonated targeting a PMU position “on the highway” and mortars landed in the area. In addition, security forces reportedly “detonated” three tanker VBIEDs in the Thar Thar area west of Samarra before they reached their targets. Fighters from the Nujaba Movement, an Iraqi Shi’a militia, repelled an attack by ISIS gunmen in Hwesh. Also, one more VBIED (or SVBIED) targeted a security checkpoint in Hwesh. To the east, an SVBIED targeted the northeastern entrance of Samarra in the Jalam area while 27 mortar rounds landed in the vicinity. The attack killed at least four members of the PMUs and injured 25 others. Security forces imposed a curfew on Samarra that was lifted later.

2 On January 7, an anonymous source in Ninewa stated that Peshmerga and ISIS members clashed in Hamdaniya district, southeast of Mosul. The clashes lasted more than nine hours and saw the use of medium and heavy weapons, resulting in the deaths of 13 foreign and Arab ISIS members and the reported capture of Wardak village, 19 miles southeast of Mosul, by Peshmerga members.

3 On January 8, an anonymous Ministry of Interior (MoI) source stated that an unknown attacker detonated an SVBIED at an Iraqi police (IP) checkpoint at noon in the Saidat area of Yusufiyah sub-district, south of Baghdad. The explosion killed three IP members and two bystanders, and wounded five IP members and seven bystanders.

4 On January 7, an anonymous source in the Interior Ministry stated that international coalition airplanes “spotted” an ISIS convoy west of Baiji. The convoy consisted of armored vehicles, Humvees, bulldozers, and other construction vehicles and it intended to cross the Fatha bridge, northeast of Baiji on its way to Tikrit. The source added that Iraqi airstrikes targeted the convoy, destroying it and killing 40 ISIS members.

5 On January 8, security forces cleared Wahid Bridge near Baghdadi sub-district, west of Hit. Security forces fought a “bloody battle” with ISIS, which resulted in the death of 15 ISIS fighters.

6 On January 8, Governor of Salah ad-Din Raed al-Juburi stated that an agreement with the governor of Kirkuk, Najm al-Din Karim, resulted in the opening of Maktab Khalid crossing in southern Kirkuk province allowing stranded Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) to cross into Kirkuk. On January 9, member of Salah ad-Din Provincial Council Ahmed Nadhum stated that ISIS has prevented “thousands” of families from fleeing Salah ad-Din using the recently reopened “Khalid crossing.” Nadhum added that ISIS has set up many checkpoints on the main road leading to the crossing, 500 meters away from a Peshmerga security checkpoint. He added that ISIS used “batons and fired bullets” in order to prevent families from crossing into Kirkuk, injuring “dozens” in the process. Minister of Migration and Displacement Jassim Mohammed stated that IDPs from Yathrib sub-district, southeast of Balad district, will be transported to the crossing and provided shelter in Tuz Khurmatu, per the agreement with the Governor of Kirkuk.

7 On January 8, an attacker wearing a suicide vest (SVEST) targeted “al-Shuhada” Shi’a mosque in al-Adel neighborhood, in northwestern Baghdad. The attack killed three people and injured at least 10, including both guards and worshipers. Spokesman for Baghdad Operations Command Saad Maan stated that the bomber “was walking with a cane” when he detonated the suicide vest. Also, two IEDs were detonated in Ur neighborhood in eastern Baghdad, killing four people and wounding 11 others.



- Major Cities
- ☠ SVEST
- 🚗 SVBIED
- 💣 Major Clash
- ✈ Airstrikes
- 🚁 Armed Drones
- Peshmerga
- Anti-ISIS Iraqi Sunni Tribes
- 🚧 Coalition
- Iraqi Shi'a militias
- ISF
- ISIS



Content: Sinan Adnan & ISW Iraq team
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January 8 witnessed two major attacks by ISIS targeting areas east and west of Samarra district in northern Salah ad-Din Province. ISIS employed direct/indirect fire in addition to Suicide Vehicle-Borne Improvised Explosive Devices (SVBIEDs) in the attacks. The attacks took place in Jalam, east of Samarra and Hwesh, west of Samarra. Jalam area used to be a staging ground for ISIS and a threat to Samarra. This threat spurred the Saraya al-Salam [Peace Brigades], an Iraqi Shi’a militia previously known as Jaysh al-Mahdi, to carry out extensive operations in this desert area to prevent an ISIS incursion on the district that houses the important Imam Askari Shrine. This is the first significant attack originating from Jalam since Saraya al-Salam handed control over its security to the Iraqi Army (IA) in October of 2014. Although the security configuration in Jalam is unclear at this time, this attack indicates that ISIS has, at least, re-established a minimum presence in the area. These attacks come at a time when ISF and militias have initiated military operations to clear ISIS from areas north of Samarra where the group had previously been unchallenged such as Dour district. Therefore, it is likely that ISIS aims to divert ISF and militias from these operations protecting Samarra. Militias and ISF will likely reinforce the environs of Samarra following these attacks. Moving north, on November 25, 2014 the local government of Kirkuk decided to block the only crossing into areas under the control of the Peshmerga in Kirkuk province from ISIS-held areas, for security reasons. This has stranded families fleeing military operation and ISIS at the crossing, generating a humanitarian crisis that finally prompted the local government of Kirkuk to re-open the crossing.