

Iraq Situation Report: January 31 - February 1, 2015

1 On January 30, ISIS launched attacks on positions of the ISF and "Popular Mobilization" near the main area of Fallujah district. Clashes took place near the Yabani Bridge [Japanese Bridge] west of Fallujah; the Hayakil area, southeast of Fallujah; and the Fallujah cement plant. MoD reported that forces from the 32nd and 39th Brigades of the 8th IA Division repelled an ISIS attack on the Falahat area, west of Fallujah. Also, Kata'ib Hezbollah (KH) reported that its forces repelled two attacks by ISIS on the Hayakil and Hitawin areas.

2 On February 1, two IEDs detonated targeting members of the "Popular Mobilization" in the Hamamiyat area, west of Camp Taji, killing one and injuring 15 others.

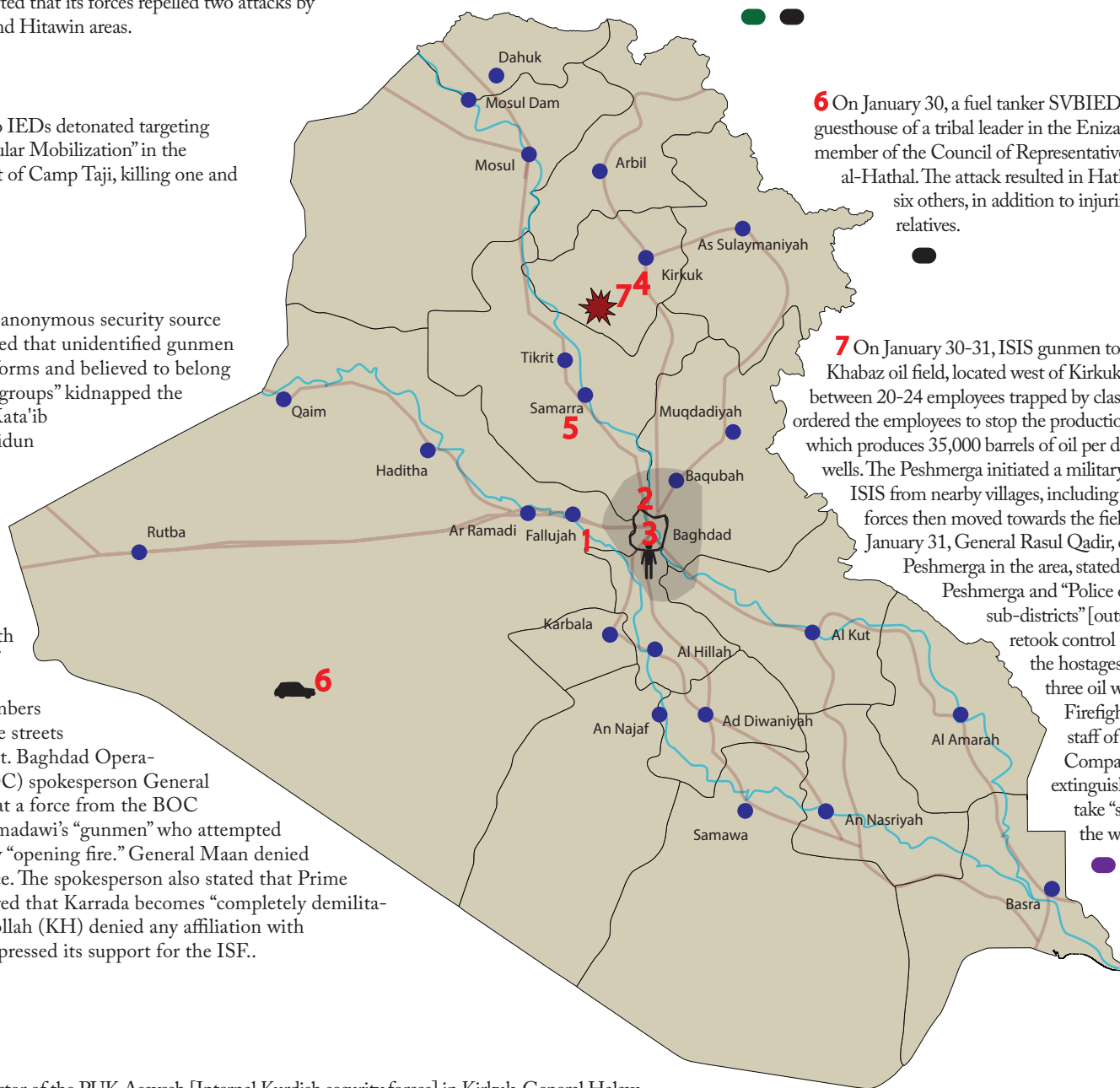
3 On February 1, an anonymous security source from Baghdad reported that unidentified gunmen wearing military uniforms and believed to belong to "one of the armed groups" kidnapped the secretary general of Kata'ib Hezbollah-al-Mujahidun (KHM), Abbas al-Muhamadawi, from the group's headquarters in Karrada, central Baghdad. The source added that clashes took place with the "participation" of Federal Police (FP) members. KHM members were reportedly in the streets following the incident. Baghdad Operations Command (BOC) spokesperson General Saad Maan stated that a force from the BOC arrested six of Muhamadawi's "gunmen" who attempted to cause instability by "opening fire." General Maan denied that clashes took place. The spokesperson also stated that Prime Minister Abadi ordered that Karrada becomes "completely demilitarized." Kata'ib Hezbollah (KH) denied any affiliation with Muhamadawi and expressed its support for the ISF.

4 On February 1, Director of the PUK Asayesh [Internal Kurdish security forces] in Kirkuk, General Halaw Najat Hamza, stated that Asayesh forces raided a home in the Domiz neighborhood in southern Kirkuk. The forces clashed with "ISIS" members killing five of them while two Asayesh members were killed.

5 On February 1, ISIS members attacked "checkpoint and watchtowers" of the ISF and "Popular Mobilization" on the Samarra-Thar Thar road that connects Samarra to Anbar province killing one member of the "Popular Mobilization" and injuring 16 others. Later, a source from Samarra Operations Command (SOC) stated that a force from SOC clashed with ISIS on the road. The force reported killing 15 ISIS members and dismantling 30 IEDs in addition to "retaking control of the road, watchtowers, and checkpoints previously taken by ISIS."

6 On January 30, a fuel tanker SVBIED detonated targeting the guesthouse of a tribal leader in the Eniza tribe and former member of the Council of Representatives (CoR) Lorans al-Hathal. The attack resulted in Hathal's death along with six others, in addition to injuring five of Hathal's relatives.

7 On January 30-31, ISIS gunmen took control of the Khabaz oil field, located west of Kirkuk City, and seized between 20-24 employees trapped by clashes. The gunmen ordered the employees to stop the production of oil from the field, which produces 35,000 barrels of oil per day and contains 400 oil wells. The Peshmerga initiated a military effort that cleared ISIS from nearby villages, including Mula Abdullah. The forces then moved towards the field to clear it. Also on January 31, General Rasul Qadir, commander of the Peshmerga in the area, stated that a force from the Peshmerga and "Police of the districts and sub-districts" [outside of Kirkuk city] retook control of the field and freed the hostages. ISIS set ablaze two or three oil wells in Khabaz. Firefighters and maintenance staff of the North Oil Company (NOC) reportedly extinguished the fire, but it will take "several" days to re-open the wells.



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

Content: Sinan Adnan
Graphics: John Sauerhoff

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Overt militia activities in central Baghdad, where many political parties and government figures reside, are unlikely to be tolerated by the government and the ISF. Iraqi Shi'a militias play an important role in the fight against ISIS. They are therefore mostly tolerated by the ISF on the frontlines away from Baghdad. In Baghdad, especially in areas like Karrada where the militias do not enjoy wide popular support and where a serious ISIS threat is not imminent, the militias are most likely perceived by the ISF as competitors over control and influence rather than allies. It is important to highlight the difference between Kata'ib Hezbollah (KH) and Kata'ib Hezbollah al-Mujahidun (KHM). The former is a lethal Iraqi Shi'a militias supported by Iran, while the latter is a controversial Iraqi Shi'a group that claims to be much more active and lethal than it really is. The kidnapping incident was likely carried out by an Iraqi Shi'a militia prompted by the controversial nature of KHM. The government is unlikely, at this time, to go after Iranian-backed militias like KH, AAH, and Badr for the important role they play on the battlefield, but it will likely increase security measures in central Baghdad to minimize such incidents. Moving north, the PUK government of Kirkuk, prompted by the recent attacks inside the city, will likely increase security measures to prevent similar attacks inside Kirkuk City, especially in areas where there are concentrations of Internally Displaced Persons fleeing areas under ISIS control or areas witnessing military operations.