

Iraq Situation Report: February 10-11, 2015

1 On February 11, Peshmerga forces and “Popular Mobilization” forces reportedly cleared three villages from ISIS control around the Riyadh area, west of Kirkuk. The operation was launched from al-Fatha Bridge, northeast of the main area of Baiji district. The source added that the Peshmerga targeted ISIS in the area using artillery and mortars, and that the security operation is ongoing with the goal of clearing the center of al-Riyadh. Also, coalition airstrikes killed 18 ISIS members and destroyed three vehicle outfitted with heavy machine guns in the area. On February 10, an anonymous security source in Kirkuk stated that coalition airstrikes targeted Hawija municipality building, southwest of Kirkuk, in addition to ISIS “headquarters facilities.” The strikes reportedly killed 20 ISIS members. The DoD stated that coalition airstrikes targeted a “weapons storage facility” near Hawija.



2 On February 11, an anonymous source in Kirkuk stated that ISIS members attacked Peshmerga positions in Taza and Daquq areas, south of Kirkuk City. The Peshmerga reportedly repelled the attack. Also, a security source in Kirkuk stated that Peshmerga and “Popular Mobilization” members attacked ISIS members in Taza. Also, an anonymous security source in Kirkuk stated that international coalition airstrikes targeted ISIS gatherings and a headquarters in the villages of al-Wihda, al-Saad, and Khaled, south of Kirkuk. According to the source, the Peshmerga targeted ISIS in the area using artillery and mortars.



3 On February 10, a Vehicle-Borne Improvised Explosive Device (VBIED) exploded in Mahmudiyah, south of Baghdad. Initial reports indicated that two civilians were killed and eight others wounded. An IED also exploded near a popular market in Mahmudiyah, killing one civilian and wounding seven others. On February 11, an SVBIED detonated at the entrance of Mahmudiyah killing four individuals and injuring 12 others.



4 On February 11, an SVBIED detonated near Camp Speicher, west of Tikrit, killing two and injuring 13 others from “joint” security forces.



5 On February 11, an SVBIED detonated targeting forces from the Federal Police (FP) in the main area of Mikishifa sub-district, south of Tikrit, injuring five FP members.



6 On February 10, anonymous “local” sources in Kirkuk stated that ISIS had deployed 20 small oil refineries in Zab sub-district, southwest of Kirkuk City. ISIS reportedly sells the refineries to operators for two million Iraqi Dinars, having brought them from Syria. ISIS provides the operators with crude oil at a cost of 68,000 Iraqi dinars per barrel. Two to three operators operate each refinery which can filter one barrel of crude oil in two hours, and produce “bad” quality products.



7 On February 10, two suicide VBIEDs (SVBIEDs) targeted a security headquarters facility “on the road linking Samarra and Thar Thar,” southwest of Samarra. The explosions killed six security force members and wounded 29 others. An anonymous police official stated that ISIS attacked the facility with mortars after the explosions. On February 11, an SVBIED targeted the Muthana facility, southwest of Samarra. The attack “killed and injured” 30 individuals.



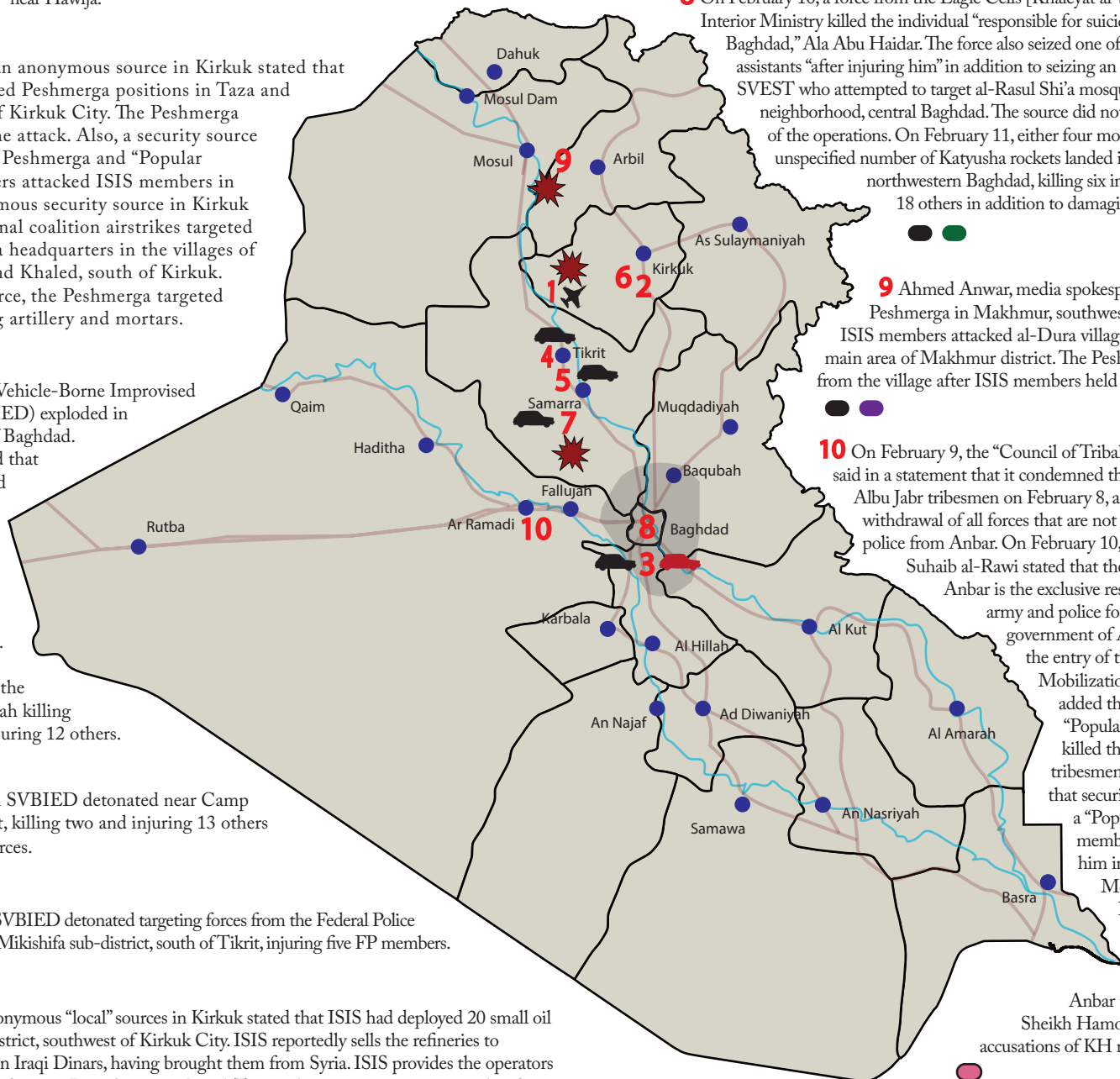
8 On February 10, a force from the Eagle Cells [Khaleyat al-Suqur] from the Interior Ministry killed the individual “responsible for suicide attacks in Baghdad,” Ala Abu Haidar. The force also seized one of Abu Haidar’s assistants “after injuring him” in addition to seizing an attacker with an SVEST who attempted to target al-Rasul Shi’a mosque in the Qahira neighborhood, central Baghdad. The source did not specify the locations of the operations. On February 11, either four mortar shells or an unspecified number of Katyusha rockets landed in al-Shula area, northwestern Baghdad, killing six individuals and injuring 18 others in addition to damaging two houses.



9 Ahmed Anwar, media spokesperson for the Peshmerga in Makhmur, southwest of Arbil, stated that ISIS members attacked al-Dura village southeast of the main area of Makhmur district. The Peshmerga pushed ISIS from the village after ISIS members held it for several hours.



10 On February 9, the “Council of Tribal Sheikhs in Anbar” said in a statement that it condemned the killing of the two Albu Jabr tribesmen on February 8, and called for the withdrawal of all forces that are not part of the army and police from Anbar. On February 10, Governor of Anbar Suhaib al-Rawi stated that the retaking of cities in Anbar is the exclusive responsibility of the army and police forces, and that the government of Anbar did not request the entry of the “Popular Mobilization” into Anbar. He added that members of the “Popular Mobilization” had killed the two Albu Jabr tribesmen. He further added that security forces had arrested a “Popular Mobilization” member and were holding him in a police station. Meanwhile, Kata’ib Hezbollah (KH) stated on its website that a “spokesman for the Anbar tribal delegation,” Sheikh Hamoud al-Fahdawi, called accusations of KH misconduct “baseless.”



100km

- Major Cities
- ✈ Airstrikes
- 🚚 VBIED
- 👤 Anti-ISIS Iraqi Sunni Tribes
- 👤 Iraqi Shi’a militias
- 🌟 Major Clash
- 🚗 SVBIED
- 🟢 ISF
- 🚁 Coalition
- 👤 Peshmerga
- 🚁 Armed Drones
- 👤 Kidnapping
- ⬛ ISIS



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

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Iranian-backed militias expanded their operations into northern Iraq where they have not previously operated. This expansion is a result of the recent talks between the local government of Kirkuk, the Badr Organization, and the Iraqi government. The launch of these operations represents a major change in the militias’ calculus, and the exact reason behind this change remains unclear. If the militias prove effective in the area, this will likely increase their influence, along with Iranian influence, in Iraq. The Kirkuk government has previously rejected the notion of deploying forces other than Peshmerga and local tribal fighters in Kirkuk province. The cooperation with the militias is likely in response to the recent attacks by ISIS on Kirkuk City that originated from the Hawija area. It is also indicative of the inability of the Iraqi Sunni anti-ISIS tribes in the area of generating manpower capable of combating ISIS in southwestern Kirkuk Province. This area is of great strategic importance to ISIS and ISIS will likely attempt to escalate its attacks elsewhere to force the militias and the Peshmerga to shift resources away from Hawija. Also, the area has historically been a hub for other groups such as the Baathist group Jaysh Rijal al-Tariqah al-Naqshabandia (JRTN), Ansar al-Islam, and Jaysh al-Mujahidin; this is likely to prolong the fighting. Elsewhere in Iraq, the past two days have witnessed a significant increase of VBIED and Suicide attacks and it will be important to watch for a further escalation in this activity as anti-ISIS forces press further in areas such as Hawija.