

Iraq Situation Report: February 14-16, 2015

1 On February 14, unidentified gunmen kidnapped CoR member Zaid al-Janabi and his uncle Sheikh Qassim Swedan, a tribal leader of the Janabat Tribe, in addition to eight of their bodyguards on the road between Baghdad and Mahmudiyah, south of Baghdad. The gunmen beat Zaid al-Janabi severely before releasing him, but the bodies of the Sheikh and the guards were found under the Sha'b Bridge in northeastern Baghdad.

2 On February 14, a security source reported that ISIS launched mortar rounds that landed on a residential compound in Baghdad killing five "civilians" and injuring seven others. Clashes in Baghdad also killed commander of the 27th Brigade Colonel Mohammed Fitikhan. ISIS kidnapped 30-40 individuals from the Obeid and Abu Nimr tribes in Baghdad, including nine IP members, and besieged the government complex. Another report indicated that ISF reinforcements arrived from Haditha. On February 15, a report indicated that ISIS besieged the residential compound and cut the water supply after taking control of the water treatment plant of the compound. In addition, ISIS kidnapped 28 IP members, killing three of them and transferring the others to Rawa and Hit in addition to seizing "a number of military vehicles and weapons;" this incident may be the same as the kidnapping reported the previous day. Forces from the IA and Iraqi Special Operations Forces (ISOF) alongside "two armored battalions" stormed Baghdad from three axes on February 15 and reportedly broke the siege on the government complex. On February 16, a security source stated that IA, IP, and tribal forces "pushed away" the ISIS threat from the residential compound without providing further details. The situation in Baghdad remains unclear; this is particularly so given statements by commander of the IP in Baghdad Colonel Qasim al-Obeidi describing the situation as "dire" and denying reports of reinforcements arriving. Obeidi called for the Shi'a religious establishment to "intervene" and "save the residents" and also called for "Gulf states" to send "urgent aid."

3 On February 14, the Defense Ministry (MoD) stated that forces from the 19th Brigade of the 5th Iraqi Army (IA) Division under Samarra Operations Command (SOC) attacked ISIS in the Zalayah area, south of Tikrit, killing and injuring "many" ISIS members. On the same day, clashes took place between ISIS and "security forces" in Mikishifa, south of Tikrit, killing 14 ISIS members, injuring eight others, and resulting in the death of four members of the security forces. On February 16, an SVBIED detonated on the road between Dijla sub-district and Samarra injuring 10 members of the "Popular Mobilization." Further clashes took place in the Mikishifa and Zalayah areas between ISIS and the "Popular Mobilization," killing four members of the "Popular Mobilization" and injuring 13 others.

4 On February 14, MoD stated that "security forces" shelled an explosives workshop, a fuel warehouse, and rocket launch-pads in the Garma area, northeast of Fallujah. The statement added that the shelling foiled a rocket attack on Baghdad and that "53 terrorists" were killed.

5 On February 12, Kata'ib Hezbollah, an Iranian-backed Iraqi Shi'a militia, stated that it "decided" to deploy a "rocket battery" to respond to indirect fire attacks on Shula, northwestern Baghdad. The statement added that this came upon "request" from the residents. On February 14, six mortar rounds landed on Shula while two others landed on Ghazaliyah, also in northwestern Baghdad. The attack killed three individuals and injured 11 others in addition to causing material damage.

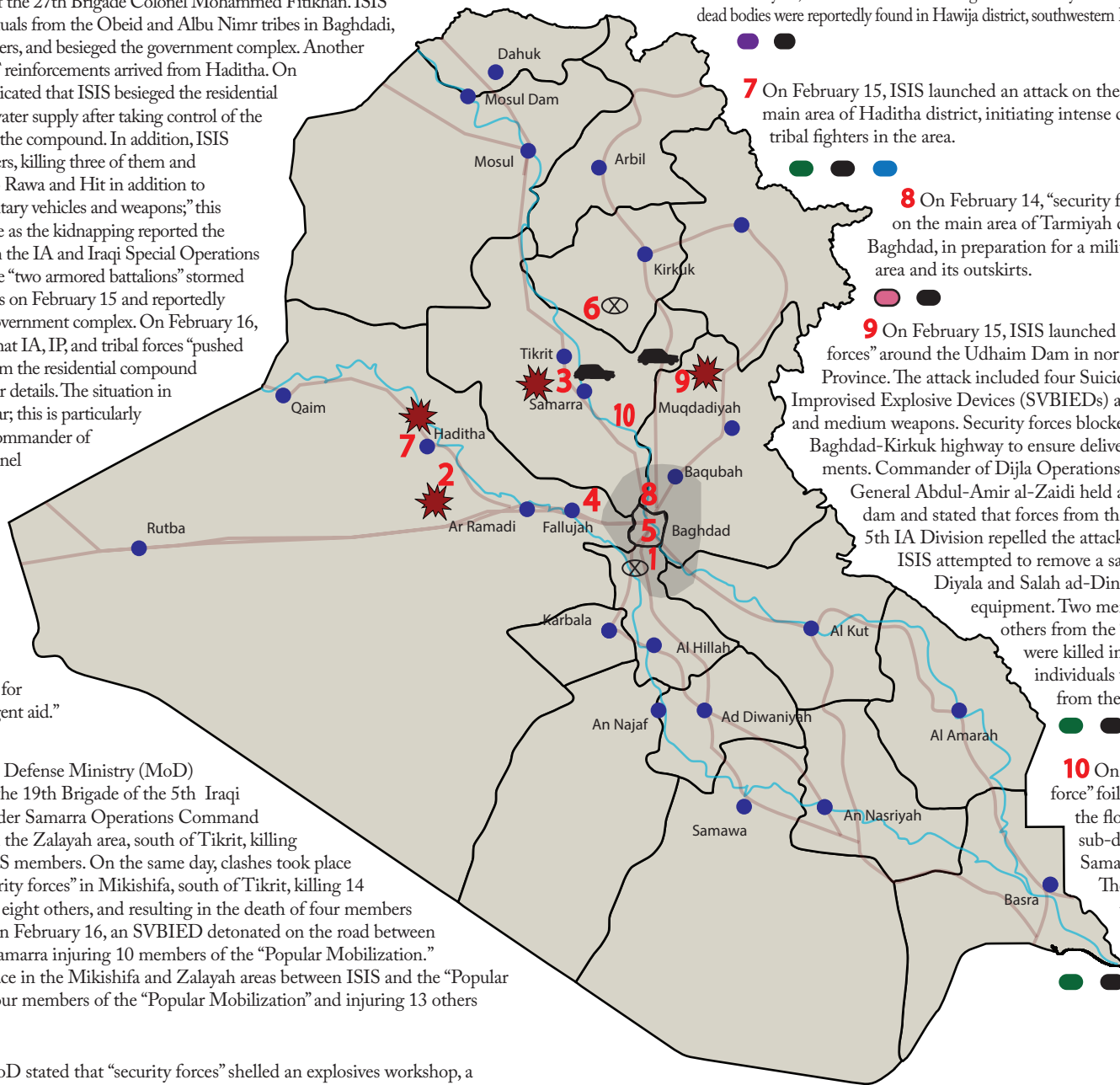
6 On February 15, ISIS executed 15 Peshmerga members they had captured previously. The dead bodies were reportedly found in Hawija district, southwestern Kirkuk Province.

7 On February 15, ISIS launched an attack on the Khasfa area, west of the main area of Haditha district, initiating intense clashes with the ISF and tribal fighters in the area.

8 On February 14, "security forces" imposed a curfew on the main area of Tarmiyah district, north of Baghdad, in preparation for a military operation in the area and its outskirts.

9 On February 15, ISIS launched an attack on "security forces" around the Udham Dam in northwestern Diyala Province. The attack included four Suicide Vehicle-Borne Improvised Explosive Devices (SVBIEDs) and gunmen with light and medium weapons. Security forces blocked the nearby Baghdad-Kirkuk highway to ensure delivery of military reinforcements. Commander of Dijla Operations Command (DOC) General Abdul-Amir al-Zaidi held a press conference at the dam and stated that forces from the 18th Brigade of the 5th IA Division repelled the attack. He further stated that ISIS attempted to remove a sand barrier between Diyala and Salah ad-Din using construction equipment. Two members of the IA and two others from the "Popular Mobilization" were killed in the clashes and 20 individuals were wounded, "mostly from the Popular Mobilization."

10 On February 14, a "security force" foiled an attempt to target the floating bridge in Dhuluiya sub-district, southeast of Samarra, using an SVBIED. The force opened fire on the tanker SVBIED and injured the driver who "fled" the area.



- 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



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Shi'a militias unresponsive to direction by the Iraqi state are undermining the authority of PM Abadi and might be threatening the political process in Iraq. The killing of Sheikh Swedan and his bodyguards was most likely carried out by Iraqi Shi'a militias and has generated a major backlash from Iraqi Sunni political leaders in Baghdad. This development came at the heels of two other recent events that have angered Iraqi Sunni leaders in Baghdad and Anbar: the killing of two Iraqi Sunnis by Shi'a militia members in Anbar and the controversy surrounding the new draft of the National Guard Law, which some Iraqi Sunni leaders claim was altered in unfavorable ways prior to voting by the Council of Representatives. At the time of publication, the Iraqi Sunni political formation Etihad and the secular Wataniyya have temporarily boycotted CoR sessions in response to the incident. On February 15, a CoR member from Etihad stated that ministers from Etihad and Wataniyya will boycott sessions of the Council of Minister for four days but will continue to perform their duties in their ministries. Also, major Iraqi Sunni figures such as Speaker of the CoR Salim al-Juburi, Deputy Prime Minister Salih al-Mutlaq, and Vice President Osama al-Nujaifi appear to be willing to work through the issue. This is evident in their attendance at a February 15 meeting with PM Abadi that included the commander of Baghdad Operations Command (BOC), General Abdu- Amir al-Shammari, to discuss this development. A February 16 meeting of the Defense and Security Committee of the CoR attended by Speaker Juburi hosted the defense and interior ministers for the same purpose. This incident has placed both the prime minister and Iraqi Sunni political leaders in a difficult position by making the PM appear unable to control the security apparatus and by making Sunni politicians appear unable to provide security for their constituency. Control over the security apparatus and the inclusion of Iraqi Sunnis are fundamental issues in Iraq's current crisis.