

Iraq Situation Report: February 17-18, 2015

1 On February 18, an anonymous police source stated that ISIS members attacked a checkpoint in the Watban Street area, west of Samarra. “Police” and “Popular Mobilization” members repelled the attack, “killing 70” ISIS members and destroying seven vehicles. Anonymous security sources stated that the attack included an SVBIED and an SVEST. The explosions killed six “Popular Mobilization” members and wounded 19 others.



2 On February 17 al-Baghdadi police chief Col. Abd al-Salam Abdullah stated that a “large” military force commanded by senior ISF commanders arrived in al-Baghdadi sub-district to break the siege around the residential compound. He added that the force delivered the “first” batch of aid to stranded residents and that clashes were ongoing near the compound. On February 18, an anonymous security source in Anbar stated that ISIS had begun demolishing government offices, police stations, and homes belonging to police and army members with explosives in al-Baghdadi sub-district.



3 On February 17, an anonymous Peshmerga source stated that international coalition airstrikes targeted ISIS positions in Makhmur district, southwest of Arbil, destroying an unspecified number of vehicles and killing an unknown number of ISIS members. On February 18, ISIS attacked Peshmerga positions in the Makhmur area, southwest of Arbil. The Peshmerga repelled the attack and killed ten ISIS members. ISIS also attacked Jarallah village, west of Makhmur. A PUK official in Makhmur, Rashid Klaly, stated that coalition airstrikes destroyed an SVBIED and killed “dozens” of ISIS members in Tel Sheir, west of Makhmur, and killed 30 ISIS members in the village of Satekan. He added that coalition airstrikes also targeted the villages of Kar Mardy, Nasrallah, and Sultan Abdullah, as well as Qayarra sub-district, south of Mosul, inflicting “heavy casualties” and destroying an unspecified number of vehicles.



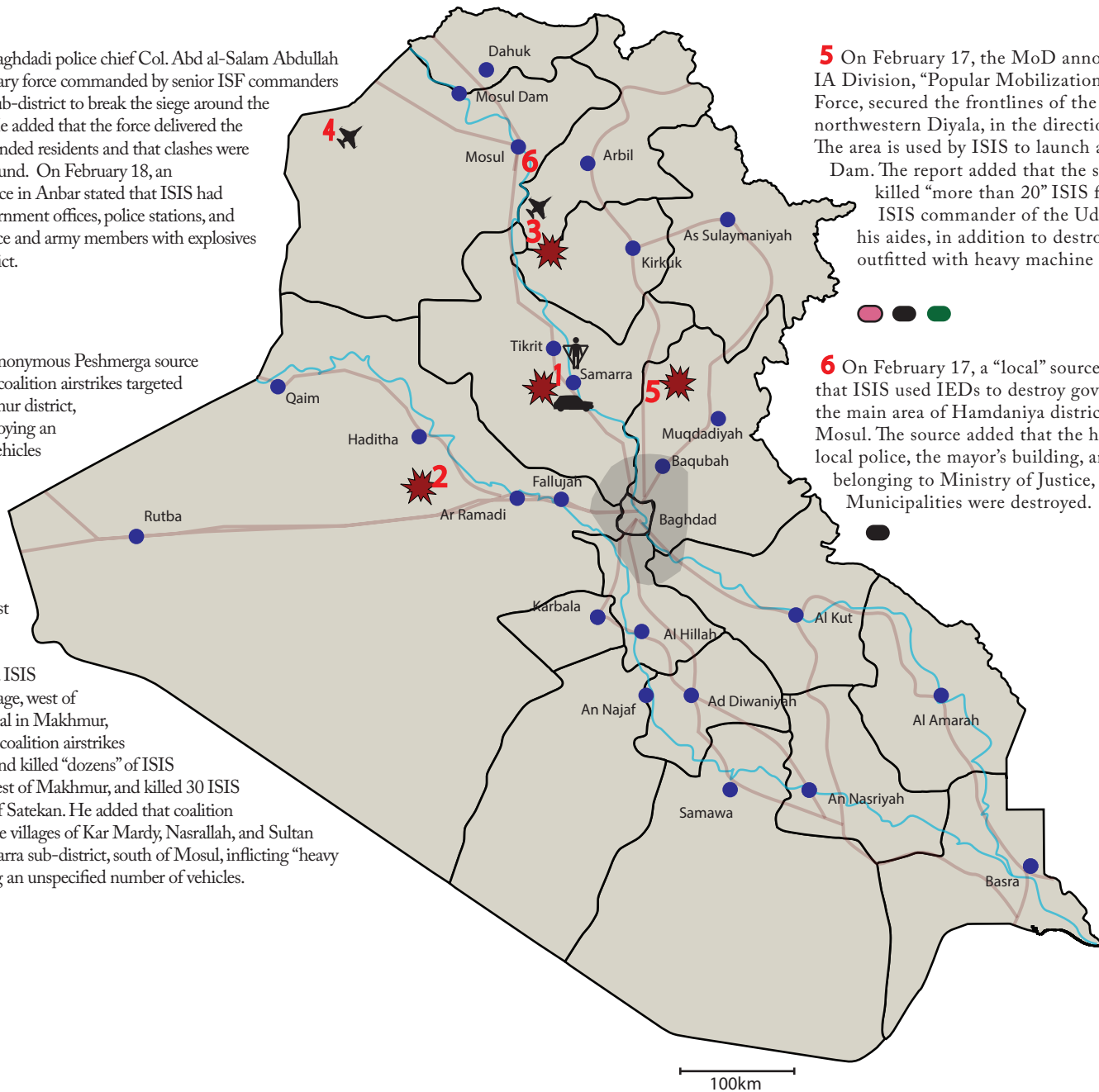
4 On February 18, a Peshmerga security source stated that coalition airstrikes targeted ISIS gatherings on the outskirts of Sinjar district, west of Mosul, killing 22 ISIS fighters.



5 On February 17, the MoD announced that the 5th IA Division, “Popular Mobilization”, and Iraqi Air Force, secured the frontlines of the Udham Dam in northwestern Diyala, in the direction of Salah al-Din. The area is used by ISIS to launch attacks on Udham Dam. The report added that the security operation killed “more than 20” ISIS fighters, including the ISIS commander of the Udham area and two of his aides, in addition to destroying vehicles outfitted with heavy machine guns.



6 On February 17, a “local” source in Ninewa stated that ISIS used IEDs to destroy government buildings in the main area of Hamdaniya district, southeast of Mosul. The source added that the headquarters of the local police, the mayor’s building, and buildings belonging to Ministry of Justice, Finance, and Municipalities were destroyed.



- Major Cities
- ✈ Airstrikes
- ✳ Major Clash
- ✈ SVEST
- 🚗 SVBIED
- Iraqi Shi’a militias
- ISF
- ISIS
- Anti-ISIS Iraqi Sunni Tribes
- Peshmerga
- 🚩 Coalition



Content: Sinan Adnan and ISW Iraq Team
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ISIS continues its offensive in Anbar near the al-Asad Airbase. ISIS has control of some parts of the nearby sub-district of Baghdadi, as its ability to demolish the homes of the Iraqi Security Forces there indicates. ISIS is also deliberately destroying government buildings and infrastructure, creating a practical as well as symbolic problem for the reconstitution of governance in the area. The ISF are almost certainly funneling forces to the sub-district to prevent its fall to ISIS. The government is likely prioritizing the operations in the area because of its proximity to the Asad Airbase and the threat upon the civilians at the residential compound. Before ISIS launched attacks on Baghdadi, Katai'b Hezbollah, a lethal Iranian backed-Iraqi Shi'a militia, deployed to Sjariya, east of Ramadi to support the Iraqi Security Forces (ISF) and Iraqi Sunni tribal fighters in operations against ISIS. That some Anbaris permitted such a militia in their area likely signals that the residents lack manpower or the high-end, lethal capabilities needed to confront ISIS. ISIS might be attempting to capitalize on this lack of resources in Anbar by forcing the ISF to redeploy forces from inside and outside the province in ways that make other areas in Anbar vulnerable. It is important to observe whether ISIS initiates another operation in Anbar against areas like Ramadi or Haditha. ISIS has regularly conducted feints to divert military resources from a given area in order to capture more terrain or to keep anti-ISIS forces in check. ISIS almost certainly conducted the attacks on Makhmour, southwest of Arbil, in order to force the Peshmerga to prioritize the defense of Arbil and divert them from conducting offensive operations against ISIS around Mosul.