

Iraq Situation Report: February 19-20, 2015

1 On February 19, an anonymous source in Ninewa Province stated that “unidentified gunmen” raided a house belonging to an ISIS leader in Sumer neighborhood, located in southeastern Mosul, killing three ISIS fighters, including the ISIS leader. Another local source stated that an IED placed by “unidentified gunmen” on Airport Street in western Mosul targeted an ISIS convoy headed for Mosul airport, killing nine and injuring five others. Following the attacks, another local source stated that ISIS conducted search raid operations in Sumer neighborhood and kidnapped “dozens” of civilians. ISIS reportedly set up checkpoints in the neighborhood and in surrounding areas.



2 On February 19, an anonymous security source stated that a “special tasks group” for the Federal Police including mechanized and “commando” companies and a detachment from the “Anti-Explosives Unit” were deployed to al-Baghdadi sub-district, west of Hit district, on the orders of Prime Minister (PM) Haidar al-Abadi. A separate report from an ISF captain in al-Baghdadi sub-district stated that weapons and ammunition had “failed to arrive” from the central government. He stated that ISIS fighters are waiting for security forces in his compound to run out of ammunition before launching a large attack.



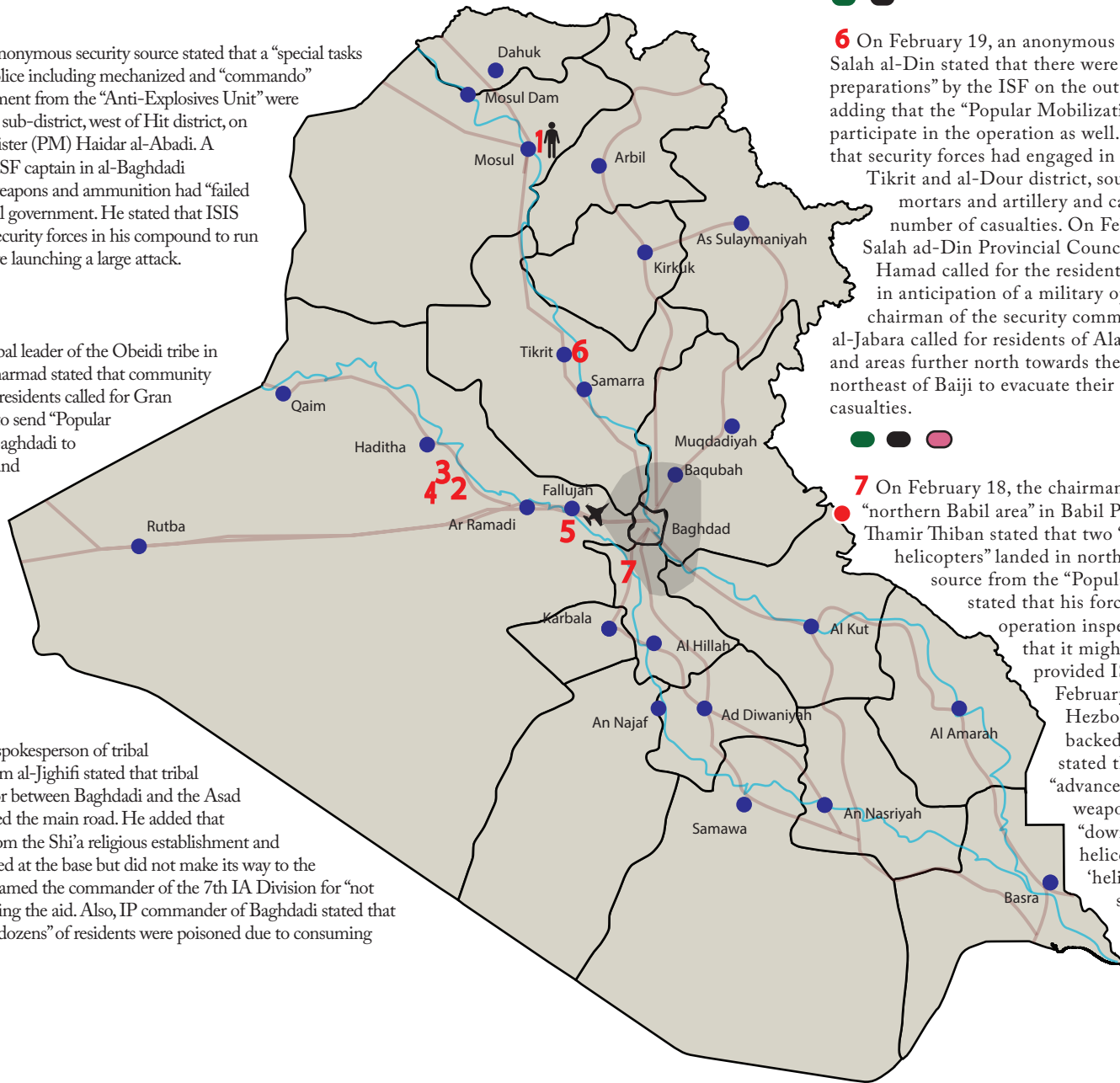
3 On February 19, a tribal leader of the Obeidi tribe in Baghdadi, Qatari al-Samarnad stated that community leaders of Baghdadi and residents called for Gran Ayatollah Ali al-Sistani to send “Popular Mobilization” forces to Baghdadi to break the ISIS siege around the residential compound. IP commander of Baghdadi called for the Prime Minister, the “southern tribes” and the U.S. to break the siege around the residential compound.



4 On February 20, the spokesperson of tribal forces in Haditha, Ibrahim al-Jighifi stated that tribal fighters opened a corridor between Baghdadi and the Asad Airbase after ISIS blocked the main road. He added that humanitarian aid sent from the Shi’a religious establishment and other organizations arrived at the base but did not make its way to the besieged residents. He blamed the commander of the 7th IA Division for “not taking his role” in delivering the aid. Also, IP commander of Baghdadi stated that three children died and “dozens” of residents were poisoned due to consuming contaminated water.



- Major Cities
- ✈ Airstrikes
- ✶ Major Clash
- ♀ Kidnapping
- ♁ SVEST
- ♁ SVBIED
- ISF
- ISIS
- Unknown Gunmen
- Iraqi Shi’a militias
- Anti-ISIS Iraqi Sunni Tribes
- Peshmerga
- ▨ Coalition



5 On February 19, an anonymous source in Anbar Operations Command (AOC) stated that the Iraqi Air Force launched airstrikes targeting an ISIS “headquarters” in Jolan neighborhood in northern Fallujah. The strikes killed 17 “ISIS members” and destroyed four vehicles, in addition to weapons, rockets, and rocket launch platforms.



6 On February 19, an anonymous security source in Salah al-Din stated that there were “large military preparations” by the ISF on the outskirts of Tikrit, adding that the “Popular Mobilization” arrived to participate in the operation as well. The source stated that security forces had engaged in “heavy shelling” of Tikrit and al-Dour district, south of Tikrit, using mortars and artillery and causing an unknown number of casualties. On February 20, member of Salah ad-Din Provincial Council (SPC), Khazal Hamad called for the residents of the city to depart in anticipation of a military operation. Also, chairman of the security commission at SPC, Jassim al-Jabara called for residents of Alam, Dour, Albu Ajil, and areas further north towards the Fatha Bridge, northeast of Baiji to evacuate their areas to avoid civilian casualties.



7 On February 18, the chairman of security for “northern Babil area” in Babil Provincial Council, Thamir Thiban stated that two “American Apache helicopters” landed in northern Babil. Later, a source from the “Popular Mobilization” stated that his forces initiated a search operation inspect the “landing” and that it might have been to provide ISIS with supplies. On February 20, Katai’b Hezbollah (KH), an Iranian backed Iraqi Shia militia, stated that it will deploy “advanced” air defense weapons capable of “downing all types of helicopters” to target “helicopters” used to supply ISIS.



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

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The ISF and Shi’a religious establishment responded to calls from security forces and tribal leaders in Baghdadi to reinforce them and break the ISIS siege of the town, which falls just outside of al-Asad airbase west of Hit. Baghdadi residents are experiencing a humanitarian crisis, which explains why they are reaching across sectarian lines for help. The reported ISF reinforcements and humanitarian aid have likely deployed forward near Baghdadi, but it appears that they have not yet broken the ISIS siege to deliver them to the city. Meanwhile, the ISF and Shi’a militias may be preparing for another attack upon Tikrit and outlying areas northeast and southeast of the ISIS-controlled city. ISIS maintains its positions in Tikrit and also continues to manage internal resistance in Mosul. The report from northern Babel insinuating US collaboration with ISIS is part of a growing trend in anti-US rhetoric from Iranian-backed lethal Shi’a militias, which is reflected now in the rhetoric of Popular Mobilization elements also. This anti-US sentiment constitutes a risk to US interests and personnel in country.