

Iraq Situation Report: February 26-27, 2015

1 On February 27, ISIS attacked the residential complex in al-Baghdadi sub-district, west of Hit district, and reportedly held “dozens” of families, using them as human shields. Chairman of Anbar Provincial Council Sabah al-Karhut called for immediate reinforcements and attributed the attack to the “withdrawal” of the 27th Brigade of the 7th Division. Spokesperson for the CTS stated that CTS forces rescued “a family” after killing two ISIS suicide bombers holding them in a home. A source from Jazeera and Badia Operations Command (JBOC) stated that local police, Iraqi army, tribal fighters, and the Golden Division rescued “dozens” of families from the compound. CTS also stated that the compound is under control and that CTS forces secured the water facility, resuming the flow of water.

2 On February 27, an anonymous “local” source in Ninewa stated that ISIS detonated IEDs targeting the runway at the Mosul airport and “booby-trapped” an unspecified number of bridges in Mosul by wiring them with explosives and placing VBIEDs beneath them

3 On February 27, an anonymous Interior Ministry (MoI) source stated that three Katyusha rockets landed near residential buildings in al-Shurta neighborhood of Dura, southern Baghdad, killing three people and wounded seven others. Unidentified gunmen killed six displaced individuals from one family from Diyala in their home in the al-Hussainiya area of northern Baghdad. An IED exploded near a produce market in Saydiyah in southern Baghdad, killing one person and wounding eight others. Another IED exploded at a popular market in Saba al-Bur area, northwest of Baghdad, killing two civilians and wounding four others. A third IED exploded at a popular market in the Shaab area, in northeastern Baghdad, killing two people and wounding six others. Yet another IED exploded in al-Nairiya area of Baghdad al-Jadida, eastern Baghdad, killing one person and wounding eight others.

4 On February 26, a source from the Joint Operations Command stated that a joint force consisting of Iraqi Army (IA), Federal Police (IP), and “Popular Mobilization” launched rockets from Multiple Launch Rocket Systems (MLRS) and heavy artillery on “selected” areas of Tikrit. “Joint forces” made “some advances” in the areas of Jalam, Sheikh Mohammed, Rassas, and Albu Khada, northeast of Samarra. Additionally, a security source in Salah al-Din stated that “security forces” and “Popular Mobilization” clashed with ISIS as the former attempted to advance into the “depth of” Sur Shnas area, north of Samarra. The clashes killed “dozens” of ISIS while 25 members of the “Popular Mobilization” were injured.

5 On February 26, an anonymous police source stated that Grad rockets targeted Agarguf area, west of Baghdad, and Saba al-Bur area, northwest of Baghdad, killing a woman and a child and wounding four children. The source did not state the source of the rockets.

6 The Director of Media Relations of the FP stated on February 26 that a force from the FP destroyed a “vehicle” carrying 10 large “armored drums filled with explosives” attempting to target security forces. He added that four “terrorists” wearing SVESTs were inside the vehicle and the vehicle was destroyed 50 meters away from a crossing connecting al-Dour area and al-Jelam area, southeast of Tikrit. The source added that another FP and “Popular Mobilization” force neutralized two additional SVBIEDs in Abu Shwarub, located near the al-Jelam area, southeast of Tikrit. One SVBIED was a “bulldozer” and another was a light armored vehicle. The source stated that the attacks sought to block important supply routes used by security forces. Despite the FP statement, Kata’ib Hezbollah, an Iranian-backed Shi’a militia, released a statement claiming responsibility for destroying the two SVBIEDs.

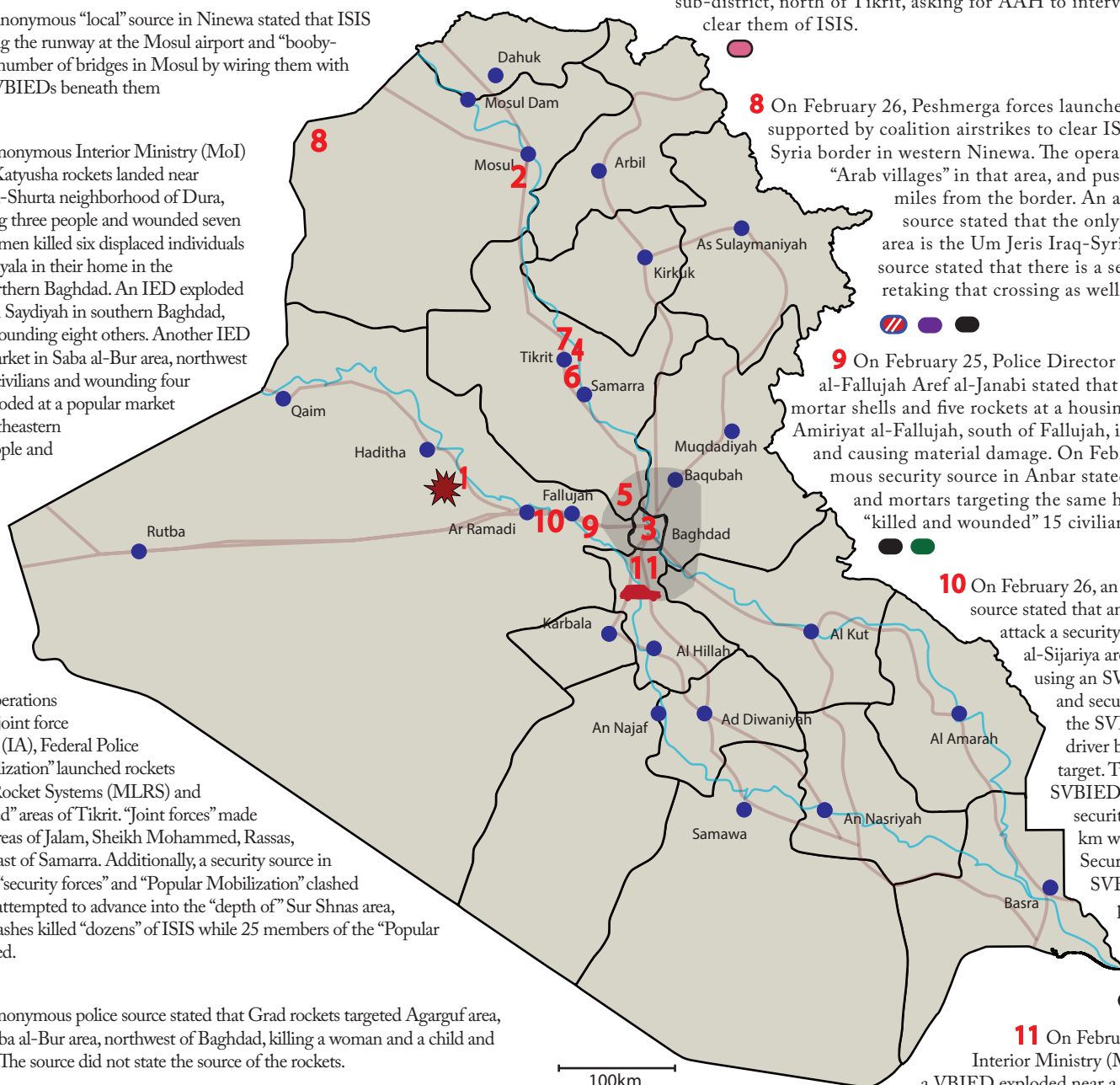
7 On February 26, Spokesperson of Iranian-backed Shi’a militia Asa’ib Ahl al-Haq (AAH) Jawad al-Talabawi stated that AAH will participate in the fighting in northern Samarra in order to clear the area and seek “revenge” against the “killers of Speicher soldiers” adding that the “only choice” for the Albu Ajil and Albu Nassir tribes is to surrender the “killers and those who helped them.” Otherwise, he warned that the “consequences would be severe.” On February 27, he stated that AAH “received calls” from “elders and tribal leaders” in al-Dour district, south of Tikrit, and al-Alam sub-district, north of Tikrit, asking for AAH to intervene in their areas to clear them of ISIS.

8 On February 26, Peshmerga forces launched an operation supported by coalition airstrikes to clear ISIS from the Iraqi-Syria border in western Ninewa. The operation cleared all the “Arab villages” in that area, and pushed ISIS about eight miles from the border. An anonymous Peshmerga source stated that the only remaining ISIS-held area is the Um Jeris Iraq-Syria border crossing. The source stated that there is a security plan aimed at retaking that crossing as well.

9 On February 25, Police Director of Amiriyat al-Fallujah Aref al-Janabi stated that ISIS launched mortar shells and five rockets at a housing complex in Amiriyat al-Fallujah, south of Fallujah, injuring ten civilians and causing material damage. On February 26, an anonymous security source in Anbar stated that ISIS rockets and mortars targeting the same housing complex “killed and wounded” 15 civilians, mostly children.

10 On February 26, an anonymous security source stated that an attacker attempted to attack a security force position in al-Sijariya area, east of Ramadi, using an SVBIED. Tribal fighters and security forces destroyed the SVBIED and killed the driver before it reached its target. Two attackers, each in an SVBIED, attempted to attack security forces in “an area 35 km west of Ramadi.” Security forces destroyed the SVBIEDs, and destroyed a parked VBIED “nearby” in al-Wifa sub-district, west of Ramadi.

11 On February 26, an anonymous Interior Ministry (MoI) source stated that a VBIED exploded near a courthouse in Mahmudiya, south of Baghdad, killing three people and wounding seven others.



- Major Cities
- ISF
- Anti-ISIS Iraqi Sunni Tribes
- ★ Major Clash
- VBIED
- Iraqi Shi’a militias
- Kidnapping
- Airstrikes
- Coalition
- ISIS
- Peshmerga
- SVEST



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

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ISIS has been taking defensive measures in Mosul in anticipation of an operation to retake the city. These measures are likely to increase as the operation approaches. These defensive measures will most certainly complicate the ISF operation to retake the city, prolonging the fighting. ISIS has entrenched itself in the city and is unlikely to mount a withdrawal in the face of such an operation. ISIS will most likely use the residents of Mosul as human shields, adding another layer of complexity. Moving south to Baghdad, the detonation of IEDs, likely the work of ISIS, has been consistent since the resurgence of AQI. The continuation of these attacks speaks to the presence of active IED cells in the capital that remain capable of carrying out such attacks despite efforts by Shi’a militias and the ISF to counter ISIS in Baghdad. Indirect fire attacks on northern Baghdad have been conducted in a semi-consistent fashion, but reports of rockets landing in southern Baghdad indicate that ISIS or another anti-government armed group has established positions south of Baghdad. In Anbar, ISIS conducted yet another attack on the residential complex in al-Baghdadi, targeting civilians. This attack on Baghdadi is likely to bring more ISF resources to the area in order to defend it from future attacks. Despite recent reports indicating that the ISF and Shi’a militia operation to clear ISIS from Tikrit was imminent, including shelling on the city and clashes in the area, it is ISW’s assessment that the ground operation to clear the city has not yet begun.