

# Iraq Situation Report: February 28 - March 1, 2015

**1** On February 28, unidentified gunmen launched a mortar round that landed in Dora, southern Baghdad. On March 1, a security force found four unidentified dead bodies with gunshot wounds in the Ma'amil area of eastern Baghdad.

**2** The operation to clear the city of Tikrit has been announced. On February 27, spokesperson of the Popular Mobilization Commission Karim Nuri stated that the operation to clear Tikrit, Dour, and Alam from ISIS control will be launched at the order of Prime Minister Abadi. Governor of Salah ad-Din Raid al-Juburi stated that residents from the province who graduated training camps will participate in the operation, and that 2,000 tents were prepared to host fleeing families in Samarra. The delay in launching the operation was reportedly in order to allow more families to flee. On February 28, IA artillery targeted "ISIS hideouts" in Dour. On March 1, an anonymous security source stated that ISIS held an unspecified number of civilians in Tikrit, Alam, and Albu Ajil as "human shields." On the same day, a resident from Tikrit stated in a phone call that "most" Tikrit residents fled the city and that those who remained are "poor," without the resources to leave. Residents of Alam reportedly remain in the area. Another report indicated that Tikrit residents are fleeing toward Alam to the east, then on to Kirkuk, while others flee to Baiji, Shirqat, and then Mosul. Also on March 1, the Office of the Prime Minister stated that the PM arrived in Samarra to "supervise" the Tikrit operation. Another statement from the office stated that the PM had announced the launch of the "security campaign to liberate Salah ad-Din," emphasizing the need to protect the civilians and their belongings. "Popular Mobilization" spokesperson Ahmed al-Asadi held a press conference announcing the launch of the operation as well. IA artillery at Camp Speicher targeted "ISIS hideouts" in Tikrit, killing 23 "ISIS members" and destroying three vehicles. The ground assault was launched toward Dour, south of Tikrit; from Tuz Khurmatu toward Alam, east of Tikrit; from Camp Speicher toward Qadisiyah, north of Tikrit; from "south of Tikrit" toward Ouja in the south; and from the Dayoum area, northwest of Tikrit, to the Yarmouk residential compound, west of Tikrit. The source highlighted that the attack on central Tikrit was launched from "multiple directions" without further specifying.

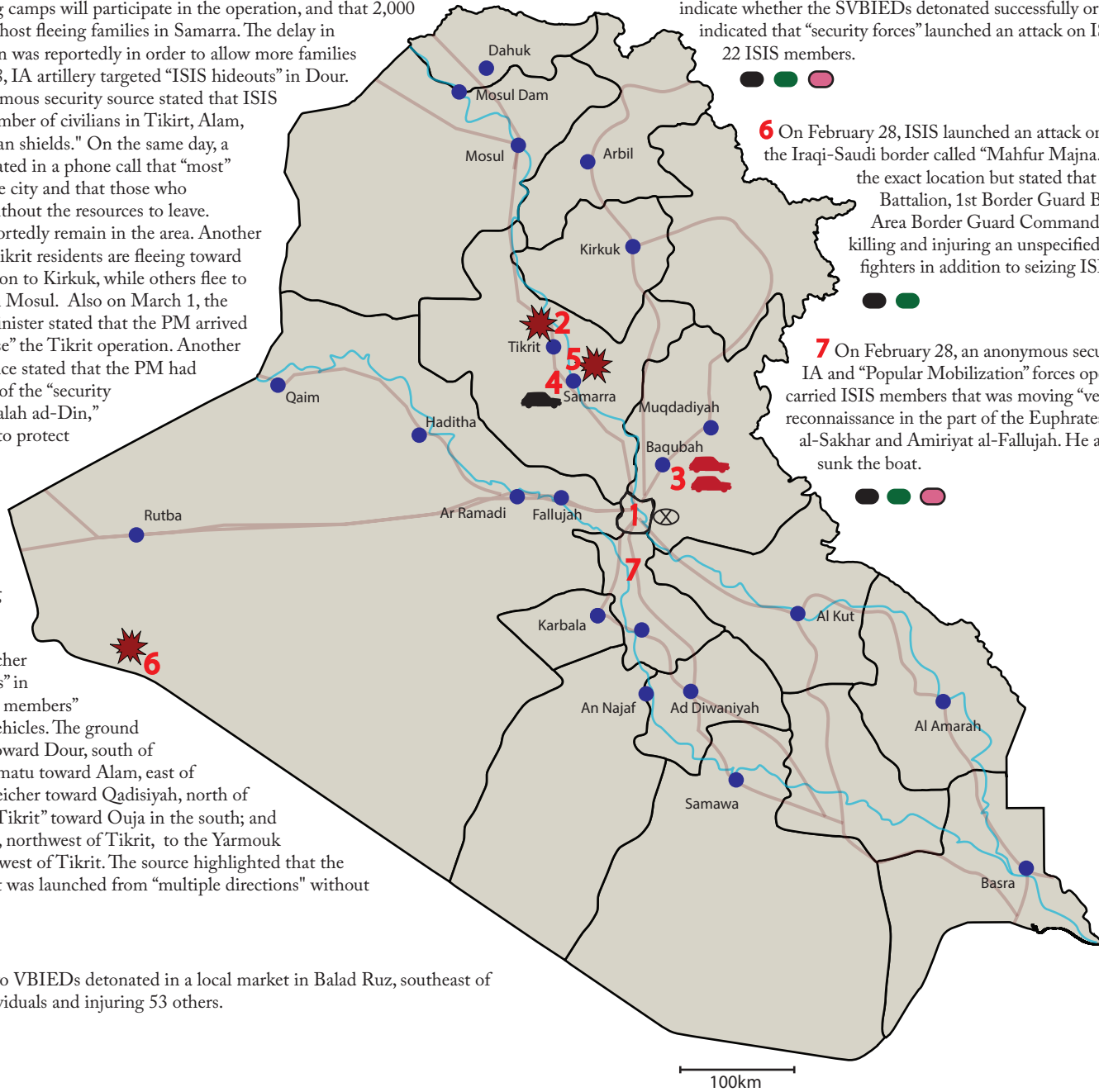
**3** On February 28, two VBIEDs detonated in a local market in Balad Ruz, southeast of Baquba killing 15 individuals and injuring 53 others.

**4** On February 28, an SVBIED detonated near the Hwesh area, west of Samarra, killing three members of the "Popular Mobilization" and injuring 15 others.

**5** On February 28, ISIS launched an attack on a headquarters of the Federal Police (FP) in the Sour Shnas area, north of Samarra, using three SVBIEDs and gunmen attempting to storm the headquarters. The attackers reportedly killed one FP member and injured eight others but failed to storm the headquarters. The source did not indicate whether the SVBIEDs detonated successfully or not. A report later indicated that "security forces" launched an attack on ISIS in the area killing 22 ISIS members.

**6** On February 28, ISIS launched an attack on a border crossing on the Iraqi-Saudi border called "Mahfur Majna." MoI did not specify the exact location but stated that a force from the 1st Battalion, 1st Border Guard Brigade, of the Fifth Area Border Guard Command, repelled the attack killing and injuring an unspecified number of ISIS fighters in addition to seizing ISIS vehicles.

**7** On February 28, an anonymous security source stated that IA and "Popular Mobilization" forces opened fire on a boat that carried ISIS members that was moving "very slowly" conducting reconnaissance in the part of the Euphrates River between Jurf al-Sakhar and Amiriyat al-Fallujah. He added that the attack sunk the boat.



- Major Cities
- ✈ Airstrikes
- ✂ Execution
- Unknown Gunmen
- ★ Major Clash
- ☛ SVBIED
- ISF
- Anti-ISIS Iraqi Sunni Tribes
- ✈ Armed Drones
- ☛ VBIED
- ISIS
- Iraqi Shi'a militias



Content: Sinan Adnan  
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The ground operation to retake Tikrit and its surrounding areas has begun. While shelling and operations on the periphery of the city have been launched previously, this appears to be the offensive that aims to retake the city from ISIS. The town has high symbolic value for the participants in the offensive. Tikrit is the hometown of deposed president Saddam Hussein and has historically been a source of anti-government insurgency. Following the fall of Mosul, the city became notorious for the massacre of hundreds of ISF members kidnapped from the nearby Camp Speicher. An ISIS video released later showed the executions of dozens of ISF members, presumably those kidnapped from the base. This massacre generated a major backlash and public outcry, especially from the parents and relatives of the soldiers, who on one occasion stormed the Council of Representatives building in central Baghdad demonstrating their frustration at the lack of answers regarding the whereabouts of their kin. This operation therefore likely has major support from Iraq's Shi'a communities, which bore the brunt of these losses. The Shi'a militias participating in the operation to retake Tikrit are therefore highly motivated to deal a counter-blow in this symbolic area. Iraqi Sunnis, likely of the Jubur tribe, are also taking part in the operation and are similarly motivated to confront ISIS. The Jubur tribe has been dislodged from their areas by ISIS. One of these areas, Alam, east of Tikrit, showed some of the earliest signs of Iraqi Sunni anti-ISIS resistance following the fall of Mosul. The sensitive nature of this operation has led PM Abadi to oversee it personally and give the order to launch it. ISIS has entrenched itself in Tikrit and will most likely mount strong resistance. In addition, ISIS has likely booby-trapped the city with IEDs, further complicating the movement of the anti-ISIS forces.