

# Iraq Situation Report: March 12-13, 2015

**1** On March 12, an anonymous security source in Salah al-Din stated that Iraqi army (IA), police, and the “Popular Mobilization” had arrived in central Tikrit. On March 13, an anonymous military source stated that the operation would not advance until reinforcements arrived. Leader of Badr Organization Hadi al-Ameri expressed confidence in a positive outcome from the fight but maintained that the combined forces needed time. In a recent statement Defense Minister Khaled al-Obeidi claimed that security forces and the “Popular Mobilization” fully controlled Tikrit.



**2** A Humvee SVBIED targeted a military headquarters in al-Dayom area in northwestern Tikrit district, killing six Iraqi Army (IA) soldiers and injuring 10 others.



**3** A security source in Salah al-Din stated that clashes continued throughout the night on the outskirts of al-Qadisiyah neighborhood, north of Tikrit, between “joint security forces” and ISIS as combined forces “attempt to control the area.” The clashes killed three members of the joint forces. The source indicated that reinforcements arrived in the area.



**4** On March 13, a source in the command of the “Popular Mobilization” stated that ISIS launched an attack on al-Hwesh area, west of Samarra, that lasted throughout the night. ISIS initiated the attack by deploying what was reported to be over two dozen SVBIEDs that were foiled by members of the Nujaba Movement, although this report may be exaggerated. Clashes erupted after the initial attack with the Nujaba Movement and Federal Police battling ISIS leaving a reported 75 ISIS members and eight members of the “Popular Mobilization” dead and 10 others injured.



**5** On March 12, forces from the Peshmerga, Turkmen volunteers, “police,” and “Popular Mobilization” launched an operation to retake Bashir village, south of Kirkuk city. The operation initiated clashes with ISIS that killed four members of the “Popular Mobilization” and injured 35 others. The forces have reportedly recaptured two villages on the way to Bashir: Sheikh Fanar al-Obeidi and Shamsiya. A leader in the “Popular Mobilization” stated that the Peshmerga attacked the village from the west with the “Popular Mobilization” approaching from the east. A separate initial report indicated that the forces surrounded and then successfully retook Bashir, although this remains unconfirmed.



**6** On March 12, Peshmerga forces launched an operation to take control of villages located near the Nahrawan area, southwest of Kirkuk city. Also, a Peshmerga commander stated that the Peshmerga took control of Multaqa sub-district, along with 15 villages southwest of Kirkuk. On March 13, an anonymous security source stated that “Popular Mobilization” and Peshmerga forces took control of the Yarmouk compound and a village in the Rashad sub-district, southwest of Kirkuk. The composition of the “Popular Mobilization” is unclear in this case and it is likely that the source was referencing to local Iraqi Sunni tribal fighters. U.S. CENTCOM stated that on March 12 five coalition airstrikes “near Kirkuk” struck an ISIS tactical unit and destroyed five excavators, three vehicles, and a VBIED. On March 13, a coalition airstrike struck a tactical unit and destroyed an armored vehicle.



- Volunteers
- Major Cities
- Peshmerga
- Airstrikes
- Anti-ISIS Iraqi Sunni Tribes
- Iraqi Shi'a militias
- Major Clash
- ISF
- SVBIED
- ISIS



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Various Iraqi forces are pressuring ISIS on three different fronts, all of which are of strategic importance to the organization. ISIS will therefore likely attempt to escalate its attacks elsewhere to divert the resources of these forces. In Salah ad-Din, which has been the main effort, the ISF and militias have been engaging ISIS since March 2, 2014 and the operation has been largely successful although the status of Tikrit remains unconfirmed at the current time. In the north, the Peshmerga with the likely support of local Iraqi Sunni tribal fighters from the Obeid tribe initiated a wide operation to dislodge ISIS from areas of southwestern Kirkuk. If this operation continues further toward the west, this would indicate that it aims at dislodging ISIS from the province rather than solely protecting Kirkuk city from ISIS attacks. Also, on March 12, Governor of Kirkuk Najm al-Din Karim stated that Hawija, an ISIS stronghold in southwestern Kirkuk, will be retaken by the “coordination” between the Peshmerga, “federal forces” and “Popular Mobilization” coming from Salah ad-Din, and local residents. This statement suggests that a deal may have been reached allowing Iraqi forces to enter the province for the purposes of this operation. This cooperation would be significant, as the Kirkuk government has previously expressed opposition to allowing federal forces to operate in the province. At the same time, Hawija has been a source of ISIS attacks against Kirkuk city, making it a priority for the Peshmerga to seek reinforcements to clear. Meanwhile, the previously mentioned operation to retake Garma, northwest of Fallujah, from ISIS is continuing, involving ISF, militias, and local fighters from Garma.