

Iraq Situation Report: March 13-18, 2015

1 On March 13, “security forces” shot and killed a militant wearing an SVEST in an orchard in Alam, northeast of Tikrit.



2 On March 13, an anonymous security source from Anbar stated that ISIS decided to prevent residents of Fallujah from leaving the city unless authorized by its “Shari’a Court.” On March 17, a source from AOC stated that ISIS “beheaded” 12 individuals near the Old Bridge in western Fallujah, mostly from the al-Dulim and al-Jumilat tribes, for allegedly collaborating with the ISF.



3 On March 14, an IP force found the body of a member of the Justice and Accountability Commission in the Sada area, east of Sadr City, after he was kidnapped from his home in Shaab, northeastern Baghdad. The body had gunshot wounds to the head and chest.



4 Between March 14-18, forces from the “Popular Mobilization” and the Peshmerga reportedly took villages near Bashir village, south of Kirkuk. On March 15, a Peshmerga source stated that ISIS destroyed a bridge that connected the villages of Ali al-Sarai and Ban Shagh, west of Daquq. From the report, it is unclear if the bridge connects the two villages to each other, or connects the villages to Tuz Khurmatu and Zarga. By March 18, the “Popular Mobilization” forces reportedly retook Bashir.



5 On March 14, a force from the Counter Terrorism Services (CTS) and the IP foiled an ISIS SVBIED in Andalus, central Ramadi. On March 15, two separate anonymous sources stated that coalition airstrikes targeted ISIS in Jumhuriya, central Ramadi. One of those sources reported a strike near a mosque that killed and injured “dozens.” Meanwhile, another report indicated that ISIS fired mortars at Barid, central Ramadi, killing one civilian and wounding “others.” ISF and tribal fighters foiled two SVBIED attacks. One targeted a police station in Dhubat and the other targeted the Andalus neighborhood of central Ramadi. Additionally, unspecified “military aviation” killed 17 ISIS members. On March 16, the deputy commander of CTS in Anbar stated that coalition airstrikes targeted ISIS snipers in the Razi hospital in central Ramadi killing “dozens.” On the same day, DoD reported that two coalition airstrikes “near Ramadi” targeted a large ISIS tactical unit, a building, a sniper, a fighting position, and an excavator. The commander of the Anbar Operations Command (AOC) stated that ISF with coalition air support killed 44 ISIS members in Albu Ali al-Jassim, north of Ramadi. Also, AOC lifted the curfew that had been imposed on the city since March 11. On March 17, the CTS deputy in Anbar stated that the combined forces repelled a “very violent” ISIS attack targeting the Andalus, Dhubat, and Muallimin neighborhoods of central Ramadi.



- Major Cities
- Major Clash
- Iraqi Shi’a militias
- Volunteers
- ISF
- Peshmerga
- ISIS
- Unknown Gunmen
- Coalition
- Execution
- Airstrikes

6 On March 17, five ISIS gunmen wearing SVESTs attacked joint security forces in the Dayoum area, northwest of Tikrit. The ensuing clashes left two IA members dead along with five of the attackers. The source did not specify if the SVESTs detonated during the clash.

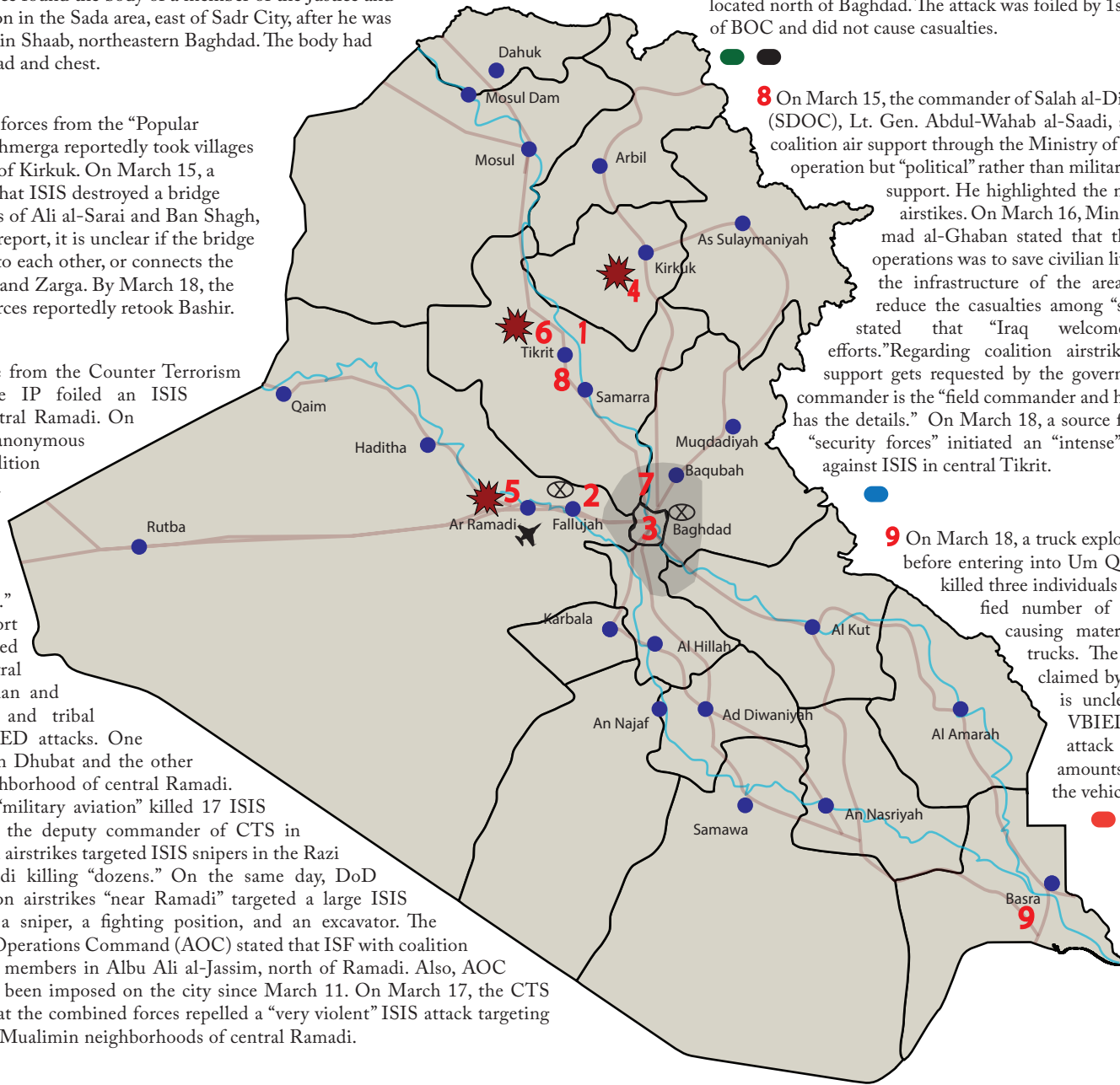


7 On March 17, the spokesperson for Baghdad Operations Command (BOC) stated that three attackers wearing SVESTs and one SVBIED attacked a security checkpoint guarding the entrance of the Tarmiyah area, located north of Baghdad. The attack was foiled by 1st Commando Battalion of BOC and did not cause casualties.



8 On March 15, the commander of Salah al-Din Operations Command (SDOC), Lt. Gen. Abdul-Wahab al-Saadi, stated that he requested coalition air support through the Ministry of Defense for the ongoing operation but “political” rather than military reasons prevented such support. He highlighted the need for precise coalition airstrikes. On March 16, Minister of Interior Mohammad al-Ghaban stated that the halt in Salah al-Din operations was to save civilian lives, save what remains of the infrastructure of the area being cleared, and to reduce the casualties among “security forces.” Ghaban stated that “Iraq welcomes all international efforts.” Regarding coalition airstrikes, he said that “this support gets requested by the government” and that the FP commander is the “field commander and he supervises all sides and has the details.” On March 18, a source from SDOC stated that “security forces” initiated an “intense” artillery bombardment against ISIS in central Tikrit.

9 On March 18, a truck exploded at a waiting station before entering into Um Qasir port. The explosion killed three individuals and injured an unspecified number of others in addition to causing material damage to nearby trucks. The attack has not been claimed by a specific group and it is unclear if the truck was a VBIED or a less sophisticated attack utilizing smaller amounts of explosives placed in the vehicle.



Content: Sinan Adnan, Patrick Martin, and Omar al-Dulimi
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The role of Iranian-backed militias is introducing an obstacle for the Iraqi Government in its effort to reclaim the territories that fell out of its control. Since the fall of Mosul in 2014, these militias have played a crucial role in retaking areas from ISIS with minimal support from coalition air power and heavy reliance on Iranian support. The lack of precise coalition targeting is for the first time a limiting factor leading Iraqi commanders to halt the operation to retake Tikrit. This is most likely the result of the complex urban environment of Tikrit. The U.S.-led coalition is unlikely to directly support such a major effort by the militias with an overt Iranian role. Similarly, the leadership of the Iranian-backed militias will likely argue for a diminished coalition role. Therefore, the Iraqi Government is presented with a challenging test of its command over the security apparatus. If this operation continues and succeeds without coalition support, then militias would use the operation as a showcase for their success without the need for the coalition. They might then seek to extend their operations into areas of Iraq where they have not previously focused. If the operation fails, it will demonstrate a significant limitation of reliance on militias in retaking major cities. Meanwhile, the operations in southern Kirkuk province are part of a Peshmerga effort to secure Daquq and the vital Baghdad-Kirkuk highway. The participation of militias and Turkmen volunteers is due to the significance of Bashir, a mostly Shi’a Turkmen village taken by ISIS following the fall of Mosul. In Basra, the nature of the attack remain unclear but previous violent attacks using similar methods were believed to be tied to business rivalries.