

Iraq Situation Report: March 24-25, 2015

1 On March 24, a security source stated that ISIS launched an attack from three axes on Sinjar district, west of Mosul. The attack was repelled by the Peshmerga, killing three ISIS fighters and injuring six others. Furthermore, the report added that an IED detonated on a vehicle transporting Yazidi fighters from Dohula Complex, north of Sinjar, to Sinuni area, northwest of Sinjar, killing one fighter and injuring another.

2 On March 25, a security source in Ninewa stated that coalition airstrikes conducted three strikes on ISIS positions in the Badush area, located north of Mosul, killing four ISIS fighters.

3 On March 23, Bani Qais tribal leader Ghanib Nafus stated that Salah al-Din Operations Command (SDOC) allowed 150 families to return to Mazraa village, south of Baiji, to assist security forces in fighting ISIS. On March 24, seven ISIS members attacked Mazraa village, and were killed by security forces and tribal fighters. "Intense airstrikes" forced ISIS in the area to withdraw, and "warplanes" targeted three ISIS gatherings in Malha, also south of Baiji. The source did not specify whether they were coalition or Iraqi warplanes. On March 24, CENTCOM reported that coalition airstrikes targeted ISIS "near Baiji"

4 On March 25, an anonymous security source stated that "violent clashes" are taking place between ISIS and security forces in Saqlawiyah, northwest of Fallujah, Thira Dijla, north of Fallujah, and the cement plant east of Fallujah. A commander in the "Popular Mobilization," Colonel Juma Fiza al-Jumili stated that a force consisting of "Popular Mobilization" and IA, assisted by coalition air support, conducted a security operation in the Sada Albu Shjal area, located northwest of Fallujah, killing 30 ISIS fighters and destroying a "number" of vehicles. Al-Jumili stated that the aim of the security operations is to surround ISIS in Garma, thus preventing them from escaping to Fallujah. On March 24, ISIS launched three separate attacks east of Ramadi: one using five armored bulldozers, one utilizing three armored vehicles "driven by suicide bombers," and a final attack by four fighters wearing Suicide Vest (SVESTs). The source said that the first attack targeted the headquarters of the 1st Battalion of the 1st Rapid Response Division in Garma, northeast of Fallujah. The second targeted soldiers of the 1st Division on al-Yabani Bridge, northeast of Ramadi. The third targeted 1st Division gatherings east of Ramadi. However, all three attacks were reportedly foiled by "security forces".

5 On March 25, an anonymous security source in Salah al-Din stated that four ISIS members wearing Suicide Vests (SVESTs) targeted security forces in they Qadisiyah neighborhood, north of Tikrit. Iraqi Army (IA), police, and "Popular Mobilization" members killed the attackers. The "Popular Mobilization" stated that an ISIS attacker driving a bulldozer Suicide Vehicle-Borne IED (SVBIED) was killed by the "Popular Mobilization" in Tikrit, and "more than 30" IEDs were dismantled.

6 On March 25, an anonymous security source stated that heavy Peshmerga shelling caused ISIS to abandon headquarters facilities in Bashiqa, northeast of Mosul, and nearby areas leading to al-Shalalat and al-Nuran, northeast of Mosul.

7 On March 23, a security source in Salah al-Din stated that "security forces" and the "Popular Mobilization" clashed with ISIS near al-Fatha Bridge area, northeast of Baiji district, resulting in the death of three "Popular Mobilization" fighters.



- Airstrike
- Major Clash
- Major Cities
- Peshmerga
- ISF
- ISIS
- Coalition
- Anti-ISIS Iraqi Sunni Tribes
- Iraqi Shi'a militias

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Prime Minister Haidar al-Abadi has announced that the "last phase" of the Salah ad-Din operations has begun, likely in reference to the operation to retake Tikrit. This marks a significant milestone not only in the operation to retake Tikrit, but also in the U.S. military effort in Iraq. The U.S. Combined Joint Task Force announced through CENTCOM's website that coalition airstrikes in support of the Tikrit operations had started. This comes after anonymous sources from the U.S.-led coalition stated on March 24 that the coalition is providing aerial reconnaissance over Tikrit. The operation had recently stalled, with some attributing the dearth of progress to lack of coalition air support. Not all are pleased by the stepped-up U.S. involvement in the campaign. Leader of the Badr Organization Hadi al-Ameri, who played a significant leadership role in the first phase of the operation, expressed his opposition on March 22 saying "Some of the weaklings in the army... say we need the Americans, while we say we do not need the Americans." On March 25, Ameri stated that the ISF command did not "consult the Popular Mobilization" regarding coalition support and that the coalition role would prevent the "Popular Mobilization" from deploying its drones over Tikrit. At the current time, Ameri and the Iranian government are likely to be more concerned about maintaining their image as a powerful, independent force on the ground than they are about achieving decisive victory against ISIS in Tikrit. The U.S. involvement, based on a request by the Iraqi Government, also deals a blow to militia/Iranian rhetoric regarding the alleged negative role of the coalition. Militia refusal of air support in contrast to Iraqi government demand for it creates a new dynamic that has not been observed before since August of 2014 when the air campaign started. It will be important to watch for any change in the role of Iranian proxy militias in this operation given the beginning of increased coalition support.