

Iraq Situation Report: March 28-30, 2015

1 On March 29, a security source in Ninewa stated that ISIS destroyed Ninewa's Traffic Department in al-Shalalat area, northeast of Mosul, with explosives, causing a large portion of the building to collapse. The source added that prior to destroying the building; ISIS looted the directorate including the car registration documents and transferred them to an unknown location.

2 On March 28, a security source stated that 150 al-Jisat tribal fighters under the command of Hamid Abdullah Hachim, a local leader in Baiji, joined the "Popular Mobilization" to support the security forces in areas south of Baiji. MoD stated that a Salah al-Din Operations Command (SDOC) force with "special forces" alongside "Popular Mobilization" killed 27 ISIS members in Albu Tama, south of Baiji; Tikrit; and in the Jazeera area. On March 30, a security source stated that ISIS fired "dozens" of mortar rounds at al-Mazraa village, south of Baiji, killing one woman and injuring four other individuals. ISIS also launched an attack on the village initiating ongoing clashes. Local residents called for air support.

3 On March 30, an anonymous source from the IP stated that an SVBIED targeted a security checkpoint at the entrance of Husseiniyah area, northern Baghdad, and that another SVBIED detonated in the Senai area, near the entrance. A conflicting report from MoI source indicated that the attacks were carried out using VBIEDs and that the explosions killed seven individuals and injured 22 others.

4 A source from the 1st Rapid Intervention Division stated that IA Aviation coordinating with the division killed six ISIS members and destroyed a house used by ISIS in al-Harariyat area, northeast of Fallujah. MoD stated that ISF from Baghdad Operations Command, tribal fighters, and "Popular Mobilization" members, supported by IA Aviation, Iraqi Air Force, and coalition air cover, destroyed four ISIS "hideouts" and an armored vehicle, and killed two ISIS members in al-Itir area, in Garma sub-district, northeast of Fallujah, all as part of the ongoing operation in Garma sub-district.

5 On March 29, an anonymous local Ninewa source stated that a coalition airstrike targeted an ISIS gathering in Qayarah sub-district, south of Mosul, killing 22 ISIS members.

6 On March 29, a source from the Dijla Operations Command stated that ISIS launched an attack via dirt roads leading from the Hamrin Mountains, east of Tikrit, using a "number" of VBIEDs and indirect fire on Albu Ajil and Alas Oil Fields, northeast of Tikrit. ISF, "Popular Mobilization", and IA Aviation repelled the attack.

7 On March 29, MoD stated that CTS, FP, and Rapid Intervention forces advanced on Tikrit from the south and west. A source from Salah ad-Din Operations Command (SDOC) stated that an unspecified airstrike destroyed one of the palaces in the city and killed 20 ISIS members. A coalition airstrike on the southern outskirts of Tikrit targeted an ISIS gathering and killed ISIS's media director for Salah ad-Din. Also, a dismantled "military force" advanced towards the southern area of Tikrit known as al-Anwa al-Jawiya initiating clashes with ISIS. On March 30, a local reporter stated that IA, FP, and the "Popular Mobilization" raised the Iraqi flag over the Tikrit hospital and the government complex in southern Tikrit, killing 36 ISIS members in the process. ISF and the "Popular Mobilization" also reportedly recaptured two buildings of the police directorate in southern Tikrit. The U.S. Department of Defense stated that between March 27 and March 30, 20 coalition airstrikes targeted ISIS positions in central Tikrit. DoD Spokesperson Colonel Steve Warren stated that the departure of Iranian-backed Iraqi Shi'a militias from the operation was "welcome" and that the air campaign has allowed the ground campaign to resume. An initial and unconfirmed report from a source in the Command of the Federal Police Forces (CFPF) stated that forces from the FP, Rapid Reaction forces, and a force from Ali al-Akbar Brigade, an armed group affiliated with the Shi'a religious establishment, took control of the Government Compound and Tikrit General Hospital.



- Major Cities
- ✈ Airstrikes
- ★ Major Clash
- 🚗 SVBIED
- Iraqi Shi'a militias
- ISF
- ISIS
- Volunteers
- Anti-ISIS Iraqi Sunni Tribes
- Coalition

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The contest for Tikrit is escalating. The ground offensive to retake the city has resumed following the U.S. airstrikes, although without the Iranian-backed militias that withdrew in opposition to U.S. coalition involvement. Despite initial reports of gains made by the ISF and allied forces in Tikrit, the operation will likely continue in the near future. Although the various armed groups allied with the government against ISIS have become collectively known as the "Popular Mobilization," there is no single "Popular Mobilization." These groups vary in particular in the degree to which they are influenced by Iran. The stance of various Shi'a armed groups regarding the role of the U.S. coalition has clarified the nature of some of these groups. Iranian-backed Iraqi Shi'a militias are not the only Iraqi Shi'a militias operating in Iraq. The rapid advance of ISIS and the subsequent religious ruling by Grand Ayatollah Ali al-Sistani mobilized Iraqi Shi'a communities in a significant way. Other armed groups affiliated with the Shi'a religious establishment include Firqat al-Abbas al-Qitaliyah, Liwa' Ansar al-Marjeia, and Liwa Ali al-Akbar. These groups have been engaged against ISIS since their formation following Sistani's ruling, although their role is not typically publicized by the media outlets of Iranian-backed militias. Unlike the previously established Iranian-backed militias, these other groups are likely to be more independent of Iranian influence. Firqat al-Abas al-Qitaliyah, for example, stated on March 28, 2015 that it had deployed forces to participate in the Tikrit operation. Liwa Ali al-Akbar made a similar statement the same day. Such participation, if true, sets these groups apart from the Iranian-backed militias and highlights the differences between the various anti-ISIS Iraqi Shi'a armed groups in Iraq. These group aligned with the religious establishment are most likely to be responsive to the Iraqi state, while Iranian-backed groups have the potential to undermine Iraq's sovereignty in the long term.