

# Iraq Situation Report: April 18-20, 2015

**1** Coalition airstrikes reportedly intensified over Albu Faraj, north of Ramadi, according to an April 19 statement by Deputy Commander of the Golden Division Abdul-Amir al-Khazraji. A separate, unconfirmed report stated that security forces retook control of Albu Faraj.



**2** On April 19, Deputy Commander of the Golden Division Abdul-Amir al-Khazraji announced an operation by the Counter-Terrorism Service (CTS), tribal fighters, IA Aviation, and the Iraqi Air Force to recapture Sofiya. ISIS attempted to attack the force using an SVBIED but troops with the CTS opened fire, killing the driver and destroying the vehicle. The commander highlighted that coalition airstrikes intensified against targets in Sijariya and Albu Ghanim to the east, and in Andalus inside Ramadi.



**3** On April 18, a security source stated that “14 Popular Mobilization battalions” with heavy weapons arrived at Habaniya base, east of Ramadi, on the orders of PM Abadi, along with CTS forces. On April 19, “Sons of Iraq” tribal council leader Hamid al-Hayes affirmed that these battalions arrived at the base. Hayes stated that he, along with 79 other Anbari leaders, met the PM prior to his departure to Washington and “officially” requested this deployment in Anbar.



**4** On April 18, a Federal Police (FP) battalion arrived “in Anbar.” Three Golden Division battalions along with Golden Division commander Maj. Gen. Fadhil al-Barwari, battalions from the Emergency Response Division (previously the ERB), and Iraqi Army (IA) forces deployed to central Ramadi. A security source stated that ISF and tribal fighters recaptured “most of the area” around the government complex. On April 19, Anbar police chief Kadhim al-Fahdawi stated that IP, Emergency Battalions of the Federal Police, and tribal fighters repelled an ISIS attack on the government complex. The UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs stated that “more than 90,000” people had fled toward Amiriyat al-Fallujah, south of Fallujah; Khalidiya, east of Ramadi; and Baghdad. On April 20, Emergency Response Division forces reportedly cleared an ISIS-occupied hospital near the government complex in central Ramadi. The U.S. Defense Department stated that eight airstrikes between April 19 and 20 targeted ISIS “near Ramadi.”



 Coalition Airstrikes

 Major Cities

 Iraqi Shi'a militias

 Peshmerga

 Execution

 ISF

 ISIS

 Major Clash

 Coalition

 Anti-ISIS Iraqi Sunni Tribes

**5** On April 18, the commander of the Salah al-Din Operations Command (SDOC) Maj. Gen. Abd al-Wahab al-Saadi stated that Baiji Oil Refinery, north of Baiji, has been cleared of ISIS control. The following day, after the refinery was reportedly cleared, clashes erupted between ISIS and “security forces” in the northern and western parts of the refinery according to an officer in the SDOC. On April 20, CENTCOM stated that “Iraqi forces regained full control of Baiji Oil Refinery “and that Iraqi Security Forces (ISF) began fortifying the refinery’s defenses.”



**6** On April 20, a security source stated that clashes were ongoing between ISIS and “security forces” in al-Sikak neighborhood in western Baiji and that “security forces” cleared Tel Abu Jarad in eastern Seneya, east of Baiji, killing eight ISIS fighters. Two “security forces” were also reported killed.



**7** On April 19, a “local” source stated that ISIS executed 24 individuals in the center of al-Zab sub-district, southwest of Kirkuk City. The source added that among those killed were members of the Municipal Council, who were previously kidnapped by ISIS.



**8** A Peshmerga source reported on April 18 that Peshmerga forces, assisted by coalition air support, launched a security operation to clear al-Atshana and al-Aziziya villages located south of al-Bashir, southwest of Kirkuk City. Another source stated that the advance initiated clashes between ISIS and Peshmerga alongside the Counter-Terrorism Forces of the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (PUK). On April 20, a commander of the IP in the province, Gen. Sarhad Qadir, stated that ISIS launched an attack on al-Atshana, al-Aziziya, and al-Murra villages, initiating clashes in which 15 ISIS fighters were killed. A Peshmerga source later stated that the clashes also killed five Peshmerga and injured 22 others.



Content: Sinan Anan, Patrick Martin, and Omar al-Dulimi  
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The Iraqi government seems to have successfully responded to an imminent ISIS threat on two important fronts, Ramadi and Baiji, that emerged over the course of last week. Additional ISF assets deployed to Ramadi, recapturing terrain with support from coalition airstrikes and significantly decreasing the threat of the fall of the city. Meanwhile, additional military assets successfully retook control of the Baiji Oil Refinery. In Anbar, the reported deployment of the “Popular Mobilization” remains unconfirmed. The reported request by some Anbari leaders to deploy the “Popular Mobilization” does not necessarily represent the collective stance of Anbari leaders, and this topic likely remains the subject of intense discussion. Anbari leader Shalan al-Nimrawi stated that Anbari tribes that have been fighting ISIS agreed upon Popular Mobilization participation. The local government did not support this participation, according to Nimrawi, until deteriorating security and the recent refugee exodus from Ramadi and surrounding areas pushed the local government to authorize PM Abadi to deploy the Popular Mobilization. Providing this authorization allows the local government to shift responsibility for the deployment to PM Abadi. An undisclosed member of the local government stated that the U.S. “notified him” that it would not provide air support to the Popular Mobilization. This report is also unconfirmed, but is likely as it mirrors a similar U.S. stance in Tikrit. The identity of what Shi’a militias, if any, may have been deployed has not been disclosed. Their identity, whether these fighters belong to Iranian-backed militias who operate independently from the ISF or to groups of Iraqi Shi’a volunteers that work under the command and control of the government, will be critical to any coordination with the United States. Meanwhile, fear of infiltration by ISIS has complicated the procedures for IDPs entering Baghdad, exacerbating an already worsened humanitarian situation. The local government of Babil similarly decided to solely permit children, women, and the elderly into the province. The worsening situation for IDPs is likely a contributing factor to an already negative perception by Iraqi Sunnis toward their political leadership and the central government.