

Iraq Situation Report: April 23-24, 2015

1 On April 22, a source stated that a tanker VBIED targeted an al-Jazeera and Badia Operations Command (JBOC) convoy in Albu Hayat, south of Haditha district, causing damage to the convoy but not inflicting casualties.

2 On April 24, an Anbar Operations Command (AOC) source stated that ISIS fighters surrounded an IA base near Thar Thar regulatory dam, northeast of Ramadi, cutting off all supply routes leading to the base. The source added that forces inside the base are responsible for protecting Thar Thar regulatory dam and the desert separating Anbar's border and Samarra. The acting commander of AOC stated that Iraqi Air Force and IA Aviation targeted ISIS during their attack on the base, inflicting heavy casualties. He added that clashes are ongoing and that ISIS is not in control of the dam. Later, an unconfirmed report indicated that base belongs to the 2nd Battalion of the 1st IA Division and that ISIS "stormed" the base, executed and kidnapped a number of IA soldiers, and captured military equipment and sent them to Fallujah.

3 On April 23, a Badr Organization official in Karbala, Hamid Sahib al-Karbali, stated that Badr Organization, in coordination with Iraqi Security Forces (ISF), deployed fighters to the "160 km" area in western Anbar, between Ramadi and Rutba, in order to assist "security forces" in repelling ISIS attacks and to fill the gaps in Anbar desert.

4 On April 22, MoD stated that a force from the Emergency Response Division (ERD) cleared an area "adjacent" to the maternity hospital in Warrar neighborhood in western Ramadi, killing six ISIS fighters and injuring a "number" of others. A separate force from the ERD and Anbar police "completely" cleared the hospital, killing nine ISIS fighters. Moreover, a force from the Federal Police (FP) and the 1st Mechanized Commando Battalion advanced from the Grand Mosque in central Ramadi towards Sindabad Park and Ramadi Hospital in northeastern Ramadi, and towards Jazeera Bridge, and Jazeera Police Station. A different force advanced from Sufiya, northeast of Ramadi, towards al-Haq mosque in northeastern Ramadi. On April 23, ERD commander Nasir al-Fartusi stated that the ERD with tribal fighters cleared the Haouz Bridge and the street connecting the bridge with the maternity hospital. The force dismantled IEDs in the Hasan Mosque in Houz, as well as 40 explosives-rigged homes, weapons caches, and an IED factory. DoD stated that an airstrike targeted ISIS "near Ramadi."

5 On April 22, a local Ninewa source stated that ISIS destroyed the Salamiya Bridge, southeast of Mosul, to impede Peshmerga progress towards Mosul. The bridge connected a route between Kirkuk and Mosul.

6 On April 23, a source in Anbar Operations Command (AOC) stated that the Iraqi Air Force conducted an airstrike targeting an ISIS gathering in al-Sina'i neighborhood in southeastern Fallujah, killing an ISIS commander and four aides. The source added that the Iraqi Air Force recently intensified sorties over Fallujah in order to target ISIS positions inside the city. On April 24, forces from the Military Intelligence Directorate of the Defense Ministry launched Multiple Launch Rocket System (MLRS) strikes at "fixed and mobile" ISIS targets in Fallujah. DoD stated that four airstrikes targeted ISIS "near Fallujah."

7 An AOC source stated that ISIS executed four Iraqi police (IP) members in al-Mashatil area, west of Fallujah. The IP members had been held for "months." ISIS threatened to execute other detainees in Fallujah.

8 On April 23, the Golden Division (GD) announced that its commander, Gen. Fadhil al-Barwari, met with Anbar Awakening Council leader Sheikh Hamid al-Hayes. They agreed to have 2,000 tribal fighters fight alongside the GD in Anbar.

9 Kata'ib Hezbollah, a long-standing Iranian proxy group released three separate statements during the last three days attacking the U.S. role in Iraq, the Iraqi Government, and the Prime Minister. The group threatened to withdraw from its fighting positions west of Baghdad in protest of what it described as poor management of the security portfolio by the government and reliance on the U.S.

10 On April 24, reports from Tikrit indicate that local leadership is discussing the status of returning families of individuals that cooperated with ISIS. A local official highlighted that a similar situation exists in Yathrib, Balad, and Alam. According to this official, Tikrit is under the control of the IP and FP, but Popular Mobilization forces are stationed in the Presidential Palaces guarding the site of Speicher Massacre and enjoy much influence in the city.



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As expected, the recent Iraqi-American cooperation that sidelined Iranian-backed Iraqi Shi'a militias has generated a push back from Iranian allies in Iraq. The statements from long-standing Iranian proxy, Kata'ib Hezbollah are likely indicative of a growing rejection by the militias of U.S. involvement and cooperation with the government of PM Abadi. The leader of another proxy group known as al-Nujaba Movement rejected the notion that his group was commanded by the state-run "Popular Mobilization" instead highlighting that Nujaba commands two "brigades" in the Popular Mobilization. Proxy groups are not the only groups emphasizing their own control over armed forces. A senior figure in the Sadrist Trend of Moqtada al-Sadr recently stated that the armed wing of the Trend is commanded by Sadr rather than PM Abadi. This comes following a recent success by the Iraqi Government in curbing two ISIS advances in northern and western Iraq with support from the U.S.-led coalition and a diminishing role for the militias. If the militias continue to be sidelined, tension will likely increase and it will be important to watch for rhetorical opposition becoming physical. Meanwhile in Ramadi, ISOF and specialty elements from the Interior Ministry are working to roll back ISIS gains in southern Ramadi, a task that will likely be complicated and time consuming given ISIS's entrenched position in these neighborhoods.