

Iraq Situation Report: September 26 - October 1, 2015

1 Turkish airstrikes target PKK in northern Iraq. Turkey continued airstrikes on September 26 against PKK positions in Aqrah District in Dohuk province.



2 ISIS VBIED attack in central Baghdad. ISIS detonated a VBIED in the mixed and commercial area of Saadoun, on the Risafa side of central Baghdad on September 28. On September 29, an ISIS attacker detonated an SVEST against an ISF checkpoint in Tarmiyah, northeast of Baghdad.



3 Turkish hostages held by Iranian proxy militia released. The 16 remaining Turkish hostages kidnapped on September 2 in eastern Baghdad were released on September 30 and returned to Ankara. The kidnappers initially stated that the hostages would be held until the lifting of the siege of Fu'ah and Kefraya, two towns in Syria held by the Syrian regime.



4 Suspected tribal fighters attack ISIS in western Anbar. Unidentified gunmen attacked ISIS fighters in a popular market in the center of Qa'im in western Anbar on September 27 using "light and medium weapons," killing six ISIS members and taking their weapons.



5 Military parade of a Najaf-Hawza affiliated armed group demonstrated the increase of the group's military capabilities. On September 26, Firqat al-Abbas al-Qitaliyah, which was originally formed to defend Karbala following June 2014, conducted a military parade in Basra. The group's leadership reiterated its subordination to the Defense Ministry and the state and added that the participants represent the reserve forces of the group, highlighting that many of them were graduates of the Hawza-sponsored summer training camps held throughout southern and central Iraq.



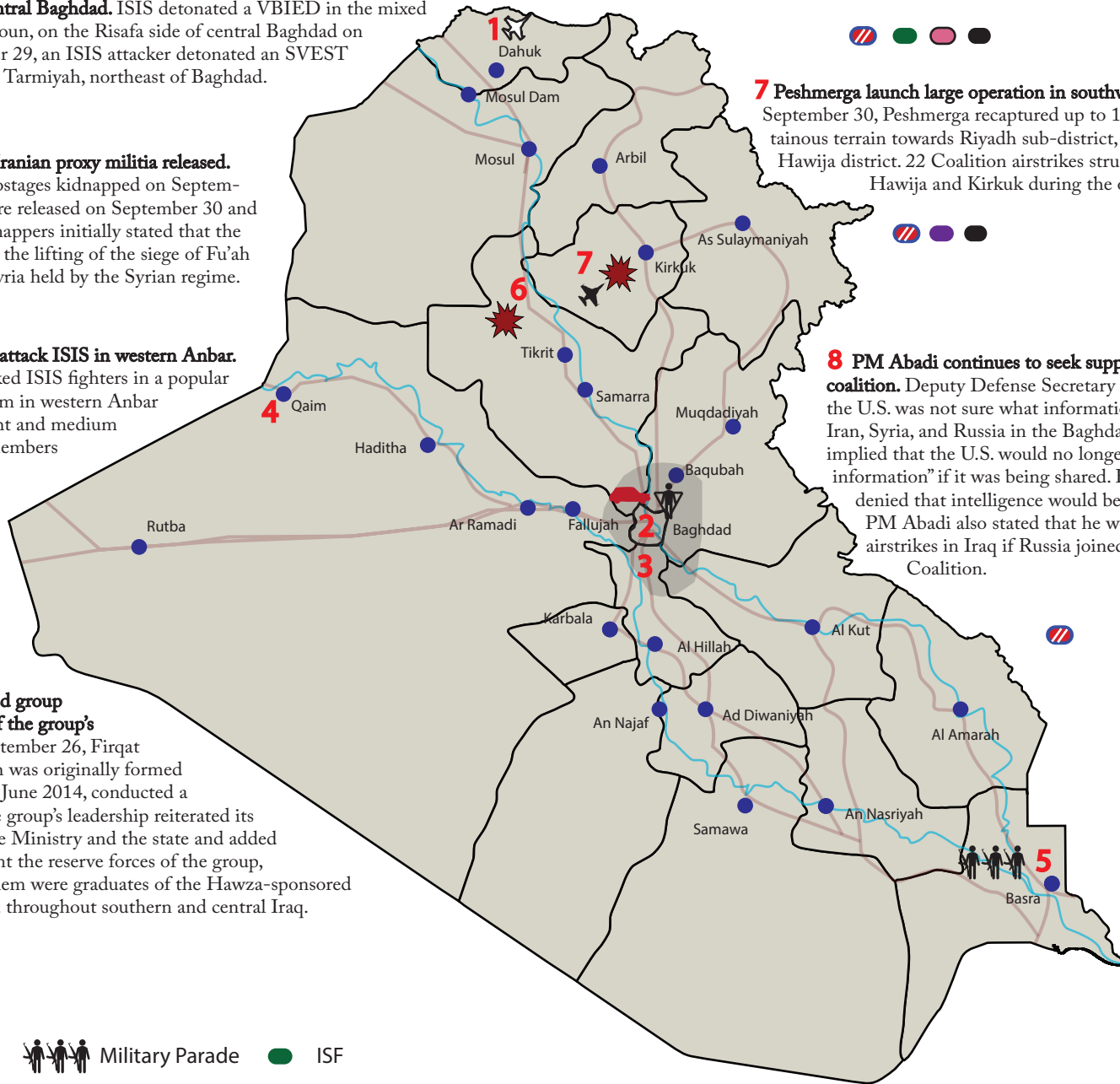
6 Clashes continue in central Baiji. Between September 26-29, security forces clashed with ISIS in the Ta'mim and Asri areas in Baiji, as well as in Tel Abu Jirad and Siniya areas west of Baiji. Two VBIEDs were destroyed by Coalition airstrikes. ISIS also attacked Albu Tuamah village south of Baiji, kidnapping civilians and clashing with "Popular Mobilization" members.



7 Peshmerga launch large operation in southwestern Kirkuk. On September 30, Peshmerga recaptured up to 17 villages and mountainous terrain towards Riyadh sub-district, southeast of ISIS-held Hawija district. 22 Coalition airstrikes struck ISIS targets "near" Hawija and Kirkuk during the operation.



8 PM Abadi continues to seek support from the U.S.-led coalition. Deputy Defense Secretary Bob Work stated that the U.S. was not sure what information Iraq shared with Iran, Syria, and Russia in the Baghdad coordination cell and implied that the U.S. would no longer provide "classified information" if it was being shared. However, PM Abadi denied that intelligence would be shared between parties. PM Abadi also stated that he would "welcome" Russian airstrikes in Iraq if Russia joined the international Coalition.



- Major Cities
- Military Parade
- ISF
- Major Clash
- SVEST
- ISIS
- Airstrikes
- VBIED
- PKK
- Turkey
- Peshmerga
- Iraqi Shi'a militias
- Anti-ISIS Iraqi Sunni Tribes
- Coalition

Content: Patrick Martin and ISW Iraq Team
Graphics: Evan Sterling



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Russian involvement in Iraq has prompted U.S. concerns that Iraqi officials may be sharing classified information with Russia and Iran amid a significant increase in Russian activity in Syria. The U.S. has signaled that it will not accept Russian pressures to relinquish its control over the direction of the anti-ISIS effort in Iraq and Syria, as Secretary of State John Kerry stated that discussions are underway to increase the number of Coalition airstrikes in the theater. PM Abadi deemphasized the importance of the Baghdad coordination cell between Iraq, Iran, Syria, and Russia, calling it an information sharing effort involving no military coordination that has been ongoing for "three months." PM Abadi also stated that he would welcome Russian airstrikes if they were "prepared to join the international Coalition." PM Abadi's rhetoric indicates that he does not want to lose the full support of the U.S.-led Coalition but may still be willing to accept limited support from non-Coalition countries in the anti-ISIS fight. Meanwhile the PUK Peshmerga launched an operation against ISIS positions west and southwest of Kirkuk towards near Hawija. While other Peshmerga offensives have occurred south of Kirkuk near Tuz Khurmato and Daquq districts in September, the new offensive is significant in that it increases the buffer zone between ISIS and Kirkuk in an area where ISIS has dominated since June 2014. The offensive does not appear to be a signal regarding the formation of the Russian coordination cell in Baghdad, but rather, part of an effort launched on September 12 in coordination with the U.S.-led Coalition to recapture territory in the province with heavy air support.