

Iraq Situation Report: October 6 - 15, 2015

1 Iraqi Kurdistan facing political crisis. Demonstrators attacked KDP headquarters buildings in several towns across Suleimaniyah province. The political crisis between the KDP and the largest opposition party, Gorran, deepened when the KDP expelled Gorran senior officials and the Gorran speaker of parliament from the capital of Arbil, sending them to Suleimaniyah and preventing them from returning.

2 Iraqi airstrike targets ISIS convoy in western Anbar. An airstrike reportedly killed eight senior ISIS leaders in Karabila area, south of Qa'im. ISIS's leader Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi was not present in the convoy as some news sources initially reported.

3 Iraqi airstrikes launched with intelligence from Russian coordination cell in Baghdad. CoR Security and Defense Committee chairman and senior Sadrist Trend member Hakim al-Zamili stated that the Russian-Iranian-Syrian-Iraqi coordination cell had been operational for one week.

4 ISIS attempts attacks in secure areas south of Samarra. Security forces killed two attackers wearing SVESTs near Ishaqi sub-district, south of Samarra. ISIS also likely placed an IED in Dhuluiya sub-district, southeast of Samarra that killed two ISF members and wounded three others.

5 ISF push to encircle Ramadi. ISF and tribal fighters clashed with ISIS in Ta'mim, Malab, and Humaira neighborhoods in southern Ramadi while separate elements reached the Albu Faraj Bridge north of Ramadi. ISF reinforcements also supported operations to approach Ramadi from the east. ISIS deployed mobile defenses around Ramadi, launching at least five VBIEDs, though not all successfully detonated. 38 Coalition airstrikes targeted ISIS "near" Ramadi and Habaniya on October 9-15.

6 Iraqi Border Guards secure, clear IEDs along Jordanian and Saudi borders. Iraqi Border Guards cleared and secured a 200 km stretch along the Jordanian and Saudi borders including the Trebil border crossing with Jordan, disarming IEDs in the area. Two additional Border Guard brigades previously deployed between Trebil and the Najaf border with Saudi Arabia on September 29 to secure the area.

7 ISF and proxy militias launch major effort to recapture Baiji and its environs. PM Abadi announced on October 12 the second phase of "Labayk Ya Rasul Allah," the name of the operation announced by PM Abadi on March 1 to recapture Tikrit. The new operation in Baiji also involves a heavy complement of Iranian proxy militias, though militias affiliated with the Shi'a religious establishment were also present. ISIS launched between seven and 17 VBIEDs in the vicinity of Baiji between October 12 and 15 in defense of ISIS-held parts of Baiji. ISF and proxy militias clashed with ISIS in Baiji and surrounded Siniya, west of Baiji. Ten Coalition airstrikes targeted ISIS "near Baiji."

8 ISF and militias surrounded the Baiji oil refinery before reportedly entering ISIS-held parts of the refinery on October 14. An Operation Inherent Resolve spokesperson stated that security forces were in the process of surrounding the refinery. However, several proxy militias contradicted the report and announced that they reached and entered the refinery on October 14.

9 Protesters demand an end to corruption in southern provinces. Popular demonstrations occurred in Baghdad, Babil, Basra, Dhi Qar, Maysan, Muthanna, Najaf, Wasit. Demonstrators clashed with security forces in Karbala while demonstrators clashed with Fadhlila party members in Diwaniya during protests over the new Fadhlila governor.



- Major Cities
- Demonstrations
- ★ Major Clash
- VBIED
- ✈ Airstrikes
- ISF
- ✈ Iraqi Airstrikes
- Coalition
- Iraqi Shi'a militias
- Anti-ISIS Iraqi Sunni Tribes
- ISIS

Content: Patrick Martin and ISW Iraq Team
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Two parallel security operations by anti-ISIS forces are underway in Iraq, one in Ramadi that is led by the Iraqi Security Forces with U.S.-led coalition support, and one that is led by Iranian agents in Baiji. The ISF are approaching Ramadi city from multiple sides, but no ISF forces have yet penetrated the city center, which ISIS has likely prepared with IED rings and other static defenses. If the ISF are unable to clear ISIS from Ramadi, it will undermine the credibility of U.S. support to Iraq at a time when Russia and Iran are competing with the U.S. for leadership of anti-ISIS operations in Iraq and Syria. Meanwhile, PM Abadi announced a major operation to recapture Baiji from ISIS on October 7 that is likely being led by Iranian proxy militias, based on the presence of several senior militia leaders and IRGC Quds Force commander Qassim Suleimani in the Baiji area before the start of operations. If the militias succeed in recapturing Baiji and the nearby refinery while the ISF-led operation in Ramadi flounders, PM Abadi will face immense pressure to continue permitting the proxy militias to take a leading role in operations. The failure of the ISF to reclaim Ramadi will also suggest not only the relative failure of the U.S.-led coalition as an effective partner for Iraq, but also a operational re-prioritization away from Anbar, which signifies a departure from a strategy to re-establish a unity Iraq.