

Iraq Situation Report: October 16 - 20, 2015

1 Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff visits Iraq. Gen. Dunford, Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, traveled to Arbil and Baghdad on October 20 for meetings with PM Haider al-Abadi, President Fuad Masoum, and American commanders. He stated that Abadi has not asked Russia to conduct airstrikes.

2 Jordan-Iraq border temporarily opens. Jordan temporarily re-opened the Trebil border crossing on October 18 to allow Iraqi trucks and goods to return to Iraq.

3 ISF launches operation to re-secure key town near al-Asad Airbase. Jazeera and Badia Operations Command (JBOC) launched an operation on October 16 to clear ISIS from areas around Baghdadi sub-district, west of Ramadi, and destroyed three VBIEDs. The Iraqi Security Forces cleared al-Dulab and al-Jibariya villages, east of Baghdadi, on October 20.

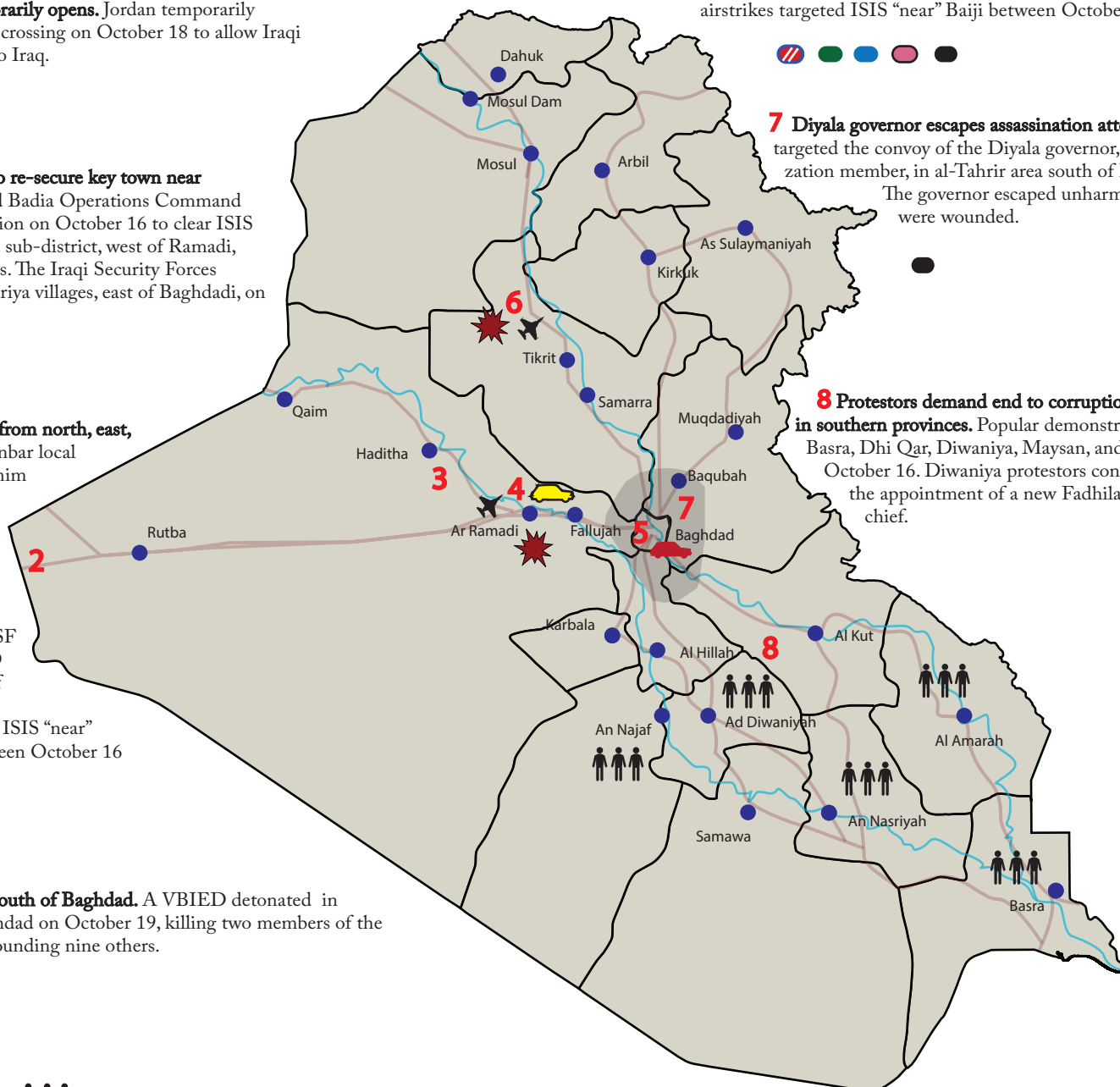
4 ISF pushes into Ramadi from north, east, and west. Iraqi Army and Anbar local police captured parts of Ta'mim neighborhood in southeastern Ramadi on October 16. ISF continues to clash with ISIS north of Ramadi in Albu Faraj and west of Ramadi in 7 Kilo, Albu Risha, and Zangura. ISF repelled at least two VBIED attacks in Albu Jalib, west of Ramadi, on October 20. 20 Coalition airstrikes targeted ISIS "near" Ramadi and Habaniya between October 16 and October 20.

5 ISIS detonates VBIED south of Baghdad. A VBIED detonated in Yusufiyah, southeast of Baghdad on October 19, killing two members of the Iraqi Security Forces and wounding nine others.

6 ISF and "Popular Mobilization" make progress in and around Baiji. Iraqi Security Forces, Iranian proxy militias, and non-proxy militias seized Siniya and the Siniya airport, west of Baiji, on October 15. Security forces also recaptured several areas north of Baiji and trapped ISIS fighters to al-Fatha, between Mount Makhul and the Hamrin Mountains. Proxy militias and a Joint Operations Command spokesperson claimed full control over Baiji, though fighting in Baiji and the Baiji Oil Refinery is ongoing. Six Coalition airstrikes targeted ISIS "near" Baiji between October 16 and October 20.

7 Diyala governor escapes assassination attempt. Two IEDs targeted the convoy of the Diyala governor, a senior Badr Organization member, in al-Tahrir area south of Baquba on October 19. The governor escaped unharmed, but two bodyguards were wounded.

8 Protestors demand end to corruption and judicial reforms in southern provinces. Popular demonstrations occurred in Basra, Dhi Qar, Diwaniya, Maysan, and Najaf on Friday, October 16. Diwaniya protestors continue to rally against the appointment of a new Fadhila governor and police chief.



- Major Cities
- ☘ Major Clash
- ✈ Airstrikes
- 🚗 Failed S/VBIED
- 👤 Demonstrations
- 🚗 VBIED
- ISF
- 🚗 Coalition
- Iraqi Shi'a militias
- Anti-ISIS Iraqi Sunni Tribes
- ISIS

Content: Patrick Martin, Logan Brog, and ISW Iraq Team
 Graphics: Evan Sterling



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The Iraqi Security Forces (ISF) and Iranian proxy militias have made rapid progress in Baiji. The ISF, Iranian-backed Iraqi Shi'a militias, and a number of non-Iranian proxy militias have recaptured key territory since Baiji operations were announced on October 14. ISF and the "Popular Mobilization" have recaptured Siniya, a town west of Baiji which security forces have had difficulty recapturing in the past. Both a Joint Operations Command spokesperson and Kata'ib al-Imam Ali, a proxy militia, claimed that Baiji city had been retaken, though fighting is ongoing in parts of Baiji and in the Baiji Oil Refinery, north of the city. The rapid progress of the Baiji operation gives Iranian proxy militias significant leverage over Prime Minister Haider al-Abadi, as they will use their prominent position in the operation's initial success to exert greater influence over the course of the anti-ISIS fight and Iraq's security sector writ large. Badr Organization leader Hadi al-Amiri stated that the proxy militias will turn their attention towards Anbar once Baiji operations conclude. However, fighters from a number of Iranian proxy militias are advancing north towards Sharqat district, the last ISIS-held district in Salah ad Din province, and Hawija, the ISIS stronghold in Kirkuk province. Proxy militias will attempt to capitalize upon a message of their success in Baiji compared to a lack of success of ISF forces backed by the U.S.-led coalition in Ramadi. Initial success in Baiji may not be permanent. Baiji is a critical location that remains exposed to counterattacks by ISIS. ISIS could launch attacks on Baiji and reassert itself in the area once the presence of security forces has diminished.