

Iraq Situation Report: December 8 - 14, 2015

1 Turkey withdraws some troops from the vicinity of Mosul. Turkish President Recep Erdogan refused to withdraw the Turkish troops from Mount Bashiqa on December 10. Turkey nevertheless withdrew an unspecified number of forces and armored vehicles from the camp towards Dohuk province on December 14, but Turkish PM Davutoglu stated that some trainers would remain at Bashiqa under a “new arrangement.”

2 ISF make major gains in Ramadi. ISF recaptured Ta'mim area in southwestern Ramadi and the Anbar Operations Command headquarters, northwest of Ramadi on December 8. ISIS destroyed parts of the Warrar Dam bridge shortly afterwards. ISF and tribal fighters also entered and clashed with ISIS in Aramal, Dhubat, and Malab neighborhoods in southeastern Ramadi on December 10. ISIS reportedly destroyed all of the bridges surrounding central Ramadi to slow the advance of the ISF.

3 U.S. role set to increase in Ramadi. Defense Secretary Ashton Carter stated on December 9 that the U.S. was prepared to offer increased support from advisors and attack helicopters in Ramadi if the Iraqi government requested further support. An anonymous U.S. official said that the request had been relayed privately to PM Abadi, who neither accepted nor rejected the request.

4 Senior Defense officials visit Ramadi. Defense Minister Khalid al-Obeidi and senior Defense Ministry officials visited northern Ramadi on December 12, where Obeidi visited troops and denounced Turkish violations of Iraqi sovereignty.

5 ISIS targets border guard base in key desert town. ISIS detonated a SVBIED at a border guard headquarters west of Nukhaib, southwest of Karbala on December 12. An unconfirmed report stated that an SVEST followed the VBIED attack. At least four ISF members and a battalion commander were killed and at least 12 others wounded.

6 Russian intelligence cell in Baghdad splits over political differences. A Badr Organization CoR member stated on December 11 that political differences, and reportedly Russian demands for being paid per airstrike, have stalled development in the intelligence-sharing cell comprised of Russia, Iraq, Iran, and Syria and that the intelligence cell did not live up to expectations.

7 Iranian proxy militias lash out against Turkish deployment. Major Iranian proxy militias including the Nujaba Movement, Asa'ib Ahl al-Haq, Badr Organization, and Saraya al-Khorasani issued a joint statement with three smaller militias on December 8 denouncing the Turkish deployment. An Iranian proxy front group, the “Death Squads,” responsible for kidnapping Turkish workers in Baghdad in September 2015, threatened to target Turkish interests in Iraq. Turkey ordered its citizens to leave all areas of Iraq other than Iraqi Kurdistan on December 9, citing security threats.

8 PM Abadi and Sistani reject Turkish deployment. Grand Ayatollah Ali al-Sistani's representative denounced the Turkish deployment without government permission on December 11, and PM Abadi ordered the Foreign Ministry to issue a formal complaint to the UN.

9 Hawza militias train Sunni local fighters. Firqat al-Abbas al-Qitaliyah and Liwa Ali al-Akbar, two militias associated with the Iraqi Shi'a religious establishment, announced on December 9 that they formed a unit of jointly-trained local fighters from the predominantly Sunni areas of al-Hajjaj and al-Mazraa, south of Baiji. The unit will participate in operations north of Baiji alongside Liwa Ali al-Akbar.

10 Iranian proxy militias continue to contest Baiji's environs. Nujaba Movement, an Iranian proxy militia, continued clearing operations in the vicinity of Makhoul, north of Baiji. Proxy militias have been engaged in the Makhoul area since Iranian proxy militias recaptured Baiji in October 2015.

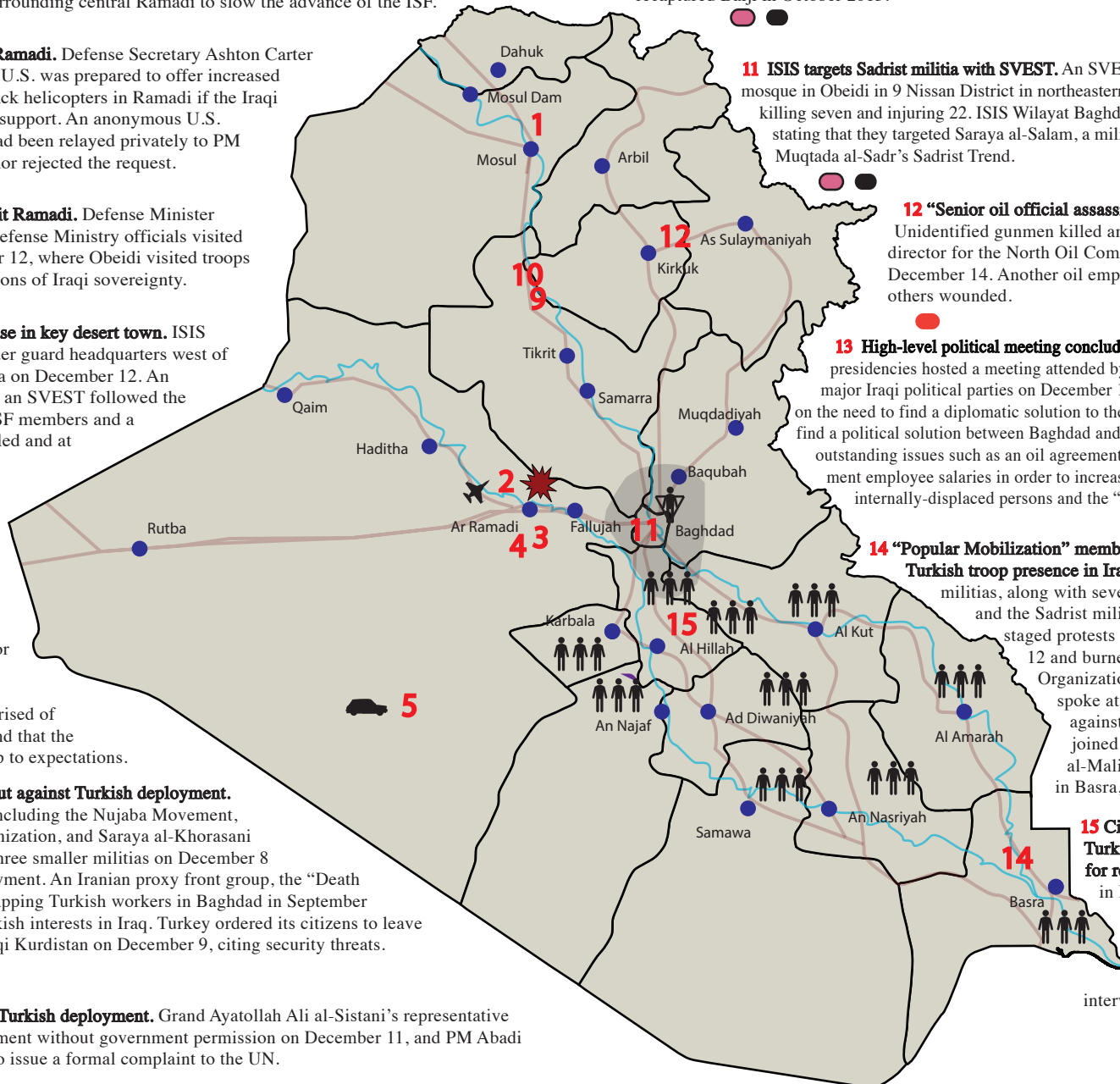
11 ISIS targets Sadrist militia with SVEST. An SVEST detonated at a Shi'a mosque in Obeidi in 9 Nissan District in northeastern Baghdad on December 9 killing seven and injuring 22. ISIS Wilayat Baghdad claimed the attack stating that they targeted Saraya al-Salam, a militia affiliated with Muqtada al-Sadr's Sadrist Trend.

12 “Senior oil official assassinated in Kirkuk. Unidentified gunmen killed an assistant general director for the North Oil Company in Kirkuk on December 14. Another oil employee was killed and two others wounded.

13 High-level political meeting concludes in Baghdad. The three presidencies hosted a meeting attended by senior leaders of all major Iraqi political parties on December 13. The attendees agreed on the need to find a diplomatic solution to the Turkish deployment, to find a political solution between Baghdad and Arbil concerning outstanding issues such as an oil agreement, and to reduce government employee salaries in order to increase allocations to internally-displaced persons and the “Popular Mobilization.”

14 “Popular Mobilization” members stage protests against Turkish troop presence in Iraq. Many Iranian proxy militias, along with several smaller Shi'a militias and the Sadrist militia Saraya al-Salam, staged protests in Baghdad on December 12 and burned Turkish flags. Badr Organization leader Hadi al-Amiri spoke at the Baghdad march against Turkish troops and was joined by Vice President Nouri al-Maliki. Protest also occurred in Basra, Babil, and Samawa.

15 Civil demonstrators protest Turkish deployment and call for reforms. Popular protests in Baghdad and the southern provinces demonstrated for reforms and against the Turkish intervention on December 11.



- Major Cities
- SVBIED
- ✈ Airstrikes
- ☒ SVEST
- ☒ Parade
- ☒ Major Clash
- ☒ Coalition
- ISF
- Iraqi Shi'a Militias
- Anti-ISIS Iraqi Sunni Tribes
- Turkey
- ISIS
- Unknown Gunmen

Content: Patrick Martin and ISW Iraq Team
 Graphics: Emily Anagnostos ©2015 by the Institute for the Study of War



The ISF accomplished major gains in Ramadi amid reports of an imminent increase of U.S. support, recapturing key areas north and south of the city and began advancing into the city's southeastern neighborhoods. ISIS's destruction of four bridges around Ramadi may slow the ISF's advance, though ISF operations in southern Ramadi continued towards the city center on December 14. Defense Secretary Ashton Carter signaled willingness to provide additional assistance, including attack helicopters and additional advisers, but PM Abadi has yet to accept the assistance. PM Abadi is likely hesitating because of longstanding pressure from Iranian proxies, who threatened the possibility of a vote of no confidence on December 2 if PM Abadi accepted any more U.S. assistance. Pro-Iranian Shi'a politicians and proxy militias are using the controversy over Turkish troops near Mosul as an additional tactic to pressure PM Abadi to accept no additional foreign assistance other than from Iran and Russia.