








Iraq Situation Report: December 15 - 21, 2015




1 ISIS attacks Peshmerga with VBIEDS and SVESTS in Sinjar area. Coalition airstrikes destroyed two SVBIEDs attacking Peshmerga positions in Tel al-Qasab, southeast of Sinjar, on December 15, while the driver of a third SVBIED fled the engagement. At least two ISIS members with SVESTs attacked Peshmerga west of Sinjar on December 17, but were repelled. An unspecified number of ISIS attackers with SVESTs attacked Hardan village on December 20 near Sinjar, killing 11 Peshmerga members and wounding nine others.   



2 Italy to deploy 450 troops to protect Mosul Dam. The force will protect maintenance crews as they repair the dam. Italy clarified that the force was not a combat force. Inherent Resolve spokesperson Col. Steve Warren stated that the force was coordinated with the Iraqi government but was not part of Coalition efforts.


3 ISIS attacks Peshmerga near Mosul. ISIS targeted Peshmerga positions near Kisik and Zumar areas, northwest of Mosul with probing attacks involving technical vehicles that were repelled on December 17.  





4 ISF clearing operations continue in Ramadi's outskirts. Sunni tribal fighters within the "Popular Mobilization" arrived north of Ramadi to support the ISF in clearing and holding territory on December 15 and 16. IA Aviation dropped leaflets over Ramadi on December 20 urging civilians to flee; however, ISIS prevented civilians from leaving.    


5 ISIS counterattacks with SVBIEDS east of Ramadi. Coalition airstrikes and security forces thwarted an attack on December 16 involving 4 - 15 SVBIEDs in Eastern Husaybah and Tel Mashhidah areas, east of Ramadi.   

6 ISIS pressures security forces south of Fallujah with VBIEDS and SVESTS. ISIS attacked the Fallujah University area on December 16, but security forces repelled the attack and killed three ISIS members wearing SVESTs. ISIS also attacked Amiriyat al-Fallujah, south of Fallujah, with an unspecified number of SVBIEDs and SVESTs, but security forces repelled the attack.   




7 Coalition airstrike hits Iraqi army unit. A Coalition airstrike accidentally hit a 55th IA Brigade force near Fallujah on December 18, resulting in ten casualties. The JOC and the Coalition confirmed the incident. Defense Secretary Ashton Carter offered his condolences to PM Abadi and stated that an investigation was ongoing. Pro-Maliki and Sadrist CoR members strongly denounced the incident, while proxy militia leader Abu Alaa promised to "retaliate" against the  

8 Unidentified gunmen kidnap Qatari nationals. Up to 26 Qatari nationals, including two members of Qatar's ruling family, were kidnapped by unidentified gunmen on December 16 near Basiyah sub-district, southeast of Samawa, during a hunting trip. Nine members of the hunting trip later escaped or were released and reached Kuwait. 

9 ISIS conducted a main attack against Turkish base and Peshmerga east of Mosul. ISIS launched heavy rocket fire on the Zaylkan base, northeast of Mosul, on December 15 and 17, wounding four Turkish soldiers and several local Sunni fighters. Turkey responded with artillery on December 17 against ISIS's positions in northern Mosul and near Bashiqa on December 17. ISIS also launched a large ground attack on December 16 and 17 against Peshmerga near Bashiqa, which was repelled by Peshmerga and Coalition airstrikes. ISIS briefly captured Tel Aswad village on the Khazar axis east of Mosul, but it was recaptured by Peshmerga.    

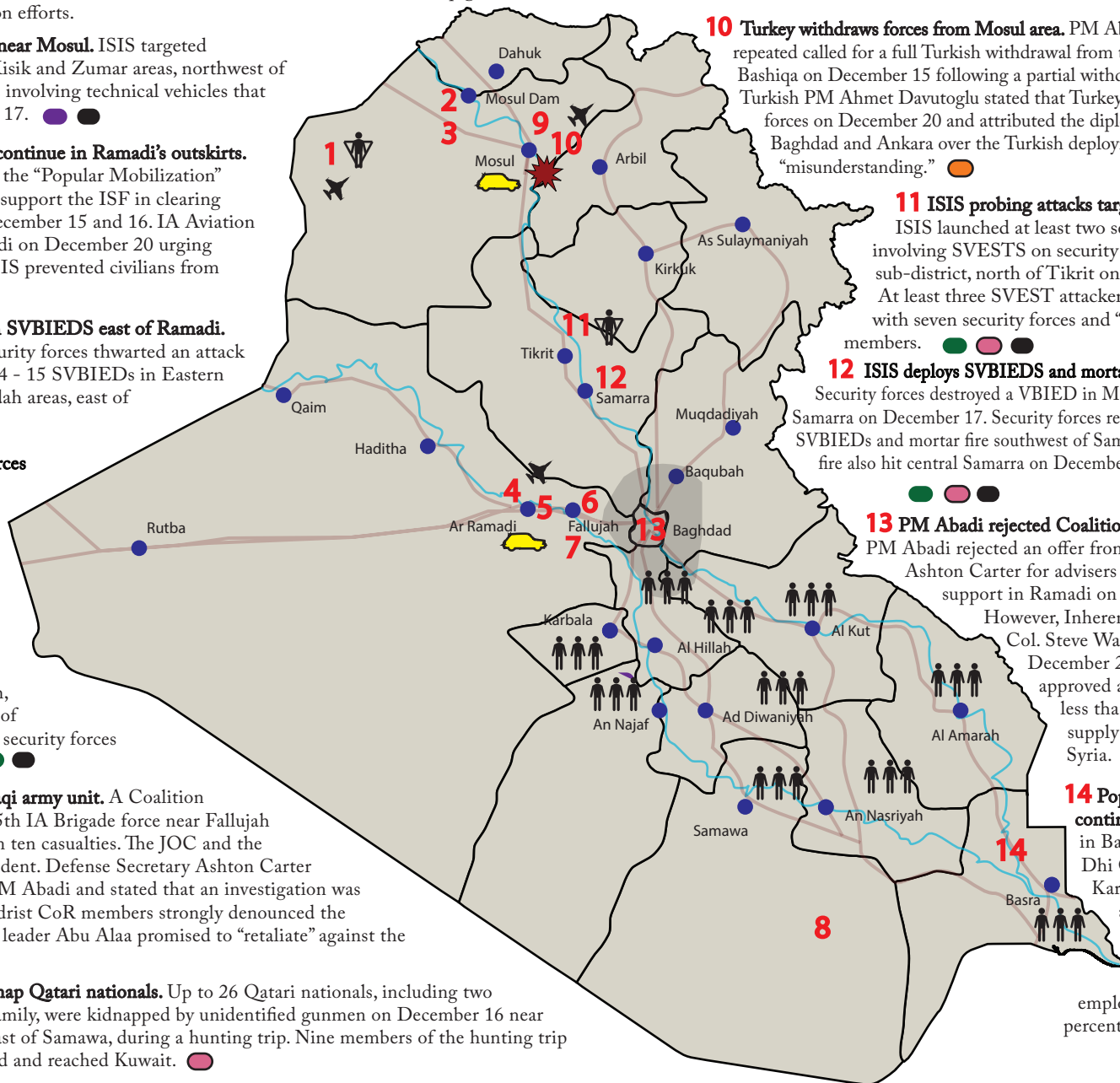
10 Turkey withdraws forces from Mosul area. PM Abadi's spokesperson repeated called for a full Turkish withdrawal from the Zaylkan camp in Bashiqa on December 15 following a partial withdrawal of Turkish troops. Turkish PM Ahmet Davutoglu stated that Turkey continued to withdraw forces on December 20 and attributed the diplomatic crisis between Baghdad and Ankara over the Turkish deployment to the area to a "misunderstanding." 

11 ISIS probing attacks target outskirts of Tikrit. ISIS launched at least two separate attacks involving SVESTs on security forces in al-Alam sub-district, north of Tikrit on December 14 and 15. At least three SVEST attackers were killed along with seven security forces and "Popular Mobilization" members.   

12 ISIS deploys SVBIEDS and mortar fire near Samarra. Security forces destroyed a VBIED in Mkaishifah area north of Samarra on December 17. Security forces repelled at least four SVBIEDs and mortar fire southwest of Samarra, while light mortar fire also hit central Samarra on December 17 and 19.   

13 PM Abadi rejected Coalition assistance in Ramadi. PM Abadi rejected an offer from Defense Secretary Ashton Carter for advisers and attack helicopter support in Ramadi on December 17. However, Inherent Resolve spokesperson Col. Steve Warren stated on December 21 that PM Abadi approved a U.S. SOF element of less than 200 to help cut ISIS's supply lines between Iraq and Syria.

14 Popular demonstrations continued on December 18 in Baghdad, Babil, Basra, Dhi Qar, Diwaniyah, Karbala, Maysan, Muthanna, Najaf, and Wasit against corruption and a budget stipulation reducing federal employee salaries by three percent.



-  Major Cities
-  Failed S/VBIED
-  Airstrikes
-  SVEST
-  Parade
-  Major Clash
-  Coalition
-  ISF
-  Iraqi Shi'a Militias
-  Turkey
-  ISIS
-  Anti-ISIS Iraqi Sunni Tribes
-  Peshmerga

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



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ISIS launched spoiling attacks across Iraq to relieve pressure by anti-ISIS forces on multiple fronts. ISIS's attacks follow operations by the Coalition and ISF and Iraq and the Coalition-backed National Democratic Forces in Syria to constrain ISIS on both fronts. In a recent press conference, Operation Inherent Resolve spokesperson Col. Steve Warren cited ongoing anti-ISIS operations in Baiji, Makhoul, and Sinjar in northern Iraq as well as Hit and Ramadi in western Iraq, combined with operations in Shaddadi and Deir ez-Zour in southern Syria. ISIS responded with attacks involving a significant offensive east of Mosul, which was reportedly the largest ground attack since ISIS recaptured Ramadi in May 2015. ISIS also attempted to set back ISF efforts to prepare an assault on Ramadi. ISIS additionally attempted diversionary and probing attacks near Tikrit, Samarra and Fallujah, in order to forestall any upcoming anti-ISIS operations elsewhere in Iraq and force anti-ISIS forces shift resources to re-secure targeted areas ISIS remains on the defensive but maintains attack capabilities across northern and western Iraq. Meanwhile, heavy pressure on PM Abadi from pro-Iranian elements forced PM Abadi to reject Coalition support for the Ramadi operation. However, the Operation Inherent Resolve spokesperson stated that PM Abadi approved of a small U.S. SOF force to cut ISIS's supply lines between Iraq and Syria. PM Abadi's ability to accept increased Coalition support suffered further when a Coalition airstrike accidentally hit an Iraqi Army unit near Fallujah on December 18, causing an uproar among pro-Iranian and Iranian proxy actors.