

Iraq Situation Report: July 11 - 13, 2015

1 Fight for Ramadi likely underway: An official statement from the Iraqi MoD indicated that the ISF recaptured the Olympic Stadium in the Kilo 7 area west of Ramadi. If the statement is correct, it appears that the ISF may have initiated combat operations to encircle Ramadi city.



2 Shaping operations ongoing around Fallujah: ISOF, Federal Police, and various Iraqi Shi'a militias including the Badr Organization, an Iranian proxy group, intensified their operations around the city of Fallujah in an effort to isolate ISIS and advance toward Fallujah itself. The combined forces reportedly made gains in south, north, and west of the city in smaller areas that represent fixing obstacles around Fallujah. Meanwhile, the official media outlet of the Iraqi military announced that a "large number" of families have fled Fallujah.

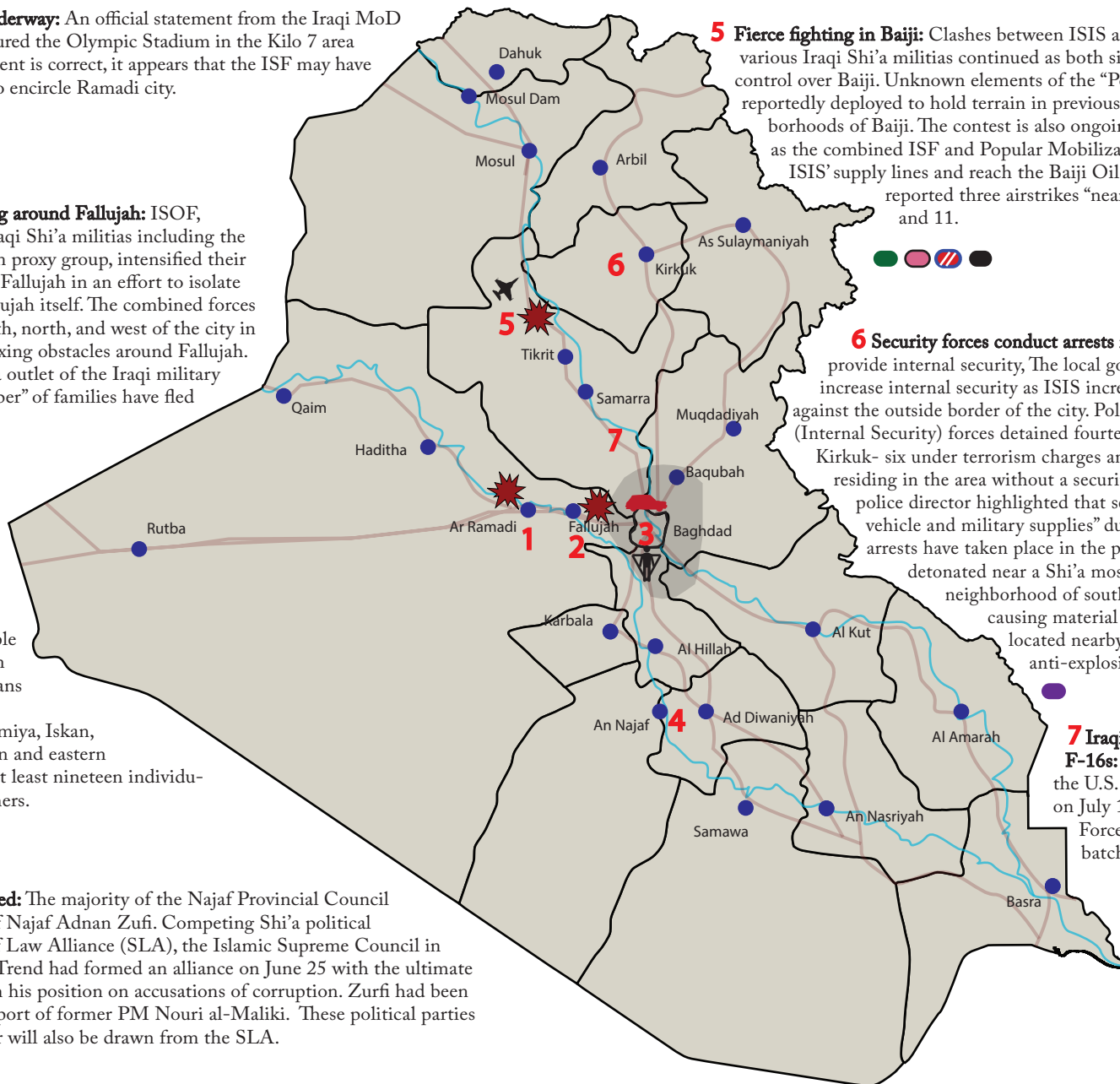


3 ISIS escalates attacks against Shi'a civilians in Baghdad: ISIS likely aims to shift the attention of the ISF and Iranian proxies away from Anbar. On July 11 and 12, ISIS launched multiple attacks using VBIEDs and an SVEST targeting Shi'a civilians and first responders in the Shi'a-majority areas of Kadhmiya, Iskan, Binog, and Sha'ab in northern and eastern Baghdad. The attacks killed at least nineteen individuals and injured at least 63 others.



4 Governor of Najaf dismissed: The majority of the Najaf Provincial Council voted to dismiss Governor of Najaf Adnan Zufi. Competing Shi'a political parties including the State of Law Alliance (SLA), the Islamic Supreme Council in Iraq (ISCI), and the Sadrist Trend had formed an alliance on June 25 with the ultimate goal of dismissing Zufi from his position on accusations of corruption. Zufi had been aligned with the SLA in support of former PM Nouri al-Maliki. These political parties agreed that the new governor will also be drawn from the SLA.

- Major Cities
- Major Clash
- VBIED
- Airstrikes
- SVEST
- Peshmerga
- ISF
- Coalition
- Anti-ISIS Iraqi Sunni Tribes
- Iraqi Shi'a militias
- Unknown Gunmen
- ISIS



100km

Content: Sinan Adnan, Patrick Martin, and ISW Iraq Team
Graphics: Evan Sterling



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5 Fierce fighting in Baiji: Clashes between ISIS and the ISF along with various Iraqi Shi'a militias continued as both sides aim to assert their control over Baiji. Unknown elements of the "Popular Mobilization" reportedly deployed to hold terrain in previously-recaptured neighborhoods of Baiji. The contest is also ongoing in areas outside Baiji as the combined ISF and Popular Mobilization forces aim to cut ISIS' supply lines and reach the Baiji Oil Refinery. U.S. DoD reported three airstrikes "near Baiji" between July 10 and 11.



6 Security forces conduct arrests in Kirkuk: In an effort to provide internal security, the local government is working to increase internal security as ISIS increase its offensive posture against the outside border of the city. Police and Kurdish Asayesh (Internal Security) forces detained fourteen individuals in Kirkuk- six under terrorism charges and eight under charges of residing in the area without a security permit. The local police director highlighted that security forces seized "a vehicle and military supplies" during the arrests. Such arrests have taken place in the past. Meanwhile, an IED detonated near a Shi'a mosque in the Wassiti neighborhood of southern Kirkuk on July 13, causing material damage. A second IED located nearby was dismantled by an anti-explosives unit.

7 Iraqi Air Force receives F-16s: After a lengthy process, the U.S. Embassy in Iraq stated on July 13 that the Iraqi Air Force had received a first batch of F-16 fighter jets.

The Iraqi Government officially announced the start of military operations to "recapture Anbar" in western Iraq from ISIS. Although the announcement did not detail the nature of these operations, ISIS's positions in the province are entrenched and distributed, challenging military operations that focus upon clearing only one city at a time under ISIS's control. Operations led by Iranian proxy groups were already underway in the vicinity of ISIS-held Fallujah prior to the announcement of the ISF's new Anbar operation, indicating the independence of several groups from the command and control of the Iraqi government. Nonetheless, attacks and engagements around Ramadi increased following the announcement. Ramadi had been mostly quiet after the fall of the city to ISIS in late May 2015, and its reemergence as a frontline suggests that the Iraqi government may intend to designate the city as its main objective while Iranian proxy groups prioritize Fallujah. Meanwhile, the occurrence of several major ISIS attacks in Baghdad likely indicates that ISIS desires to shift the attention of both the Iraqi government and the Iranian proxy forces away from Anbar Province and toward the capital. It will be important to observe whether ISIS launches further escalations or spectacular attacks in priority areas for the Iraqi government and the Iraqi Shi'a militias, including Baghdad and Diyala, especially as the end of Ramadan on July 17 approaches. Meanwhile, in southern Iraq where the security situation is relatively stable, the dismissal of Najaf's provincial governor indicates that political competition in the region is already ongoing as competing Shi'a political parties attempt to shape the political scene for the 2017 Iraqi provincial elections. Finally, F-16s promised by the U.S. to Iraq in 2011 arrived. It is not yet clear what effect they will have upon immediate ground conditions in Iraq, though once they are employed, the F-16s will increase the level of the sophistication of the Iraqi air force, which has been using the less sophisticated Russian-made SU-25s. A stronger air force will likely give the ISF more autonomy in conducting more targeted airstrikes in support of ISF operations instead of relying on the coalition giving the ISF a competitive edge over both ISIS and proxy groups.