

Iraq Situation Report: August 12 - 13, 2015

1 ISF-initiated clashes continue east of Ramadi following PM Abadi's visit to troops. PM Abadi visited Habaniyya Airbase and met with ISF members on August 11. The FP clashed with ISIS in Husayba, east of Ramadi and west of Habaniyya Airbase on August 12-13 and in the adjacent neighborhoods of Sijariya and Madhiq, east of Ramadi, on August 13. DoD reported five airstrikes "near Ramadi" on August 12-13.



2 Demonstrations continue in southern Iraq. Demonstrations against provincial governments over service shortages and corruption continued in Babil, Dhi Qar, Muthanna, Diwaniya, and Basra over August 12-13. Protesters in Basra also demonstrated against unemployment.

3 ISIS attacks Sadr City. ISIS detonated a truck VBIED at a market in Sadr City on August 13, killing 76 and wounding 212, constituting the single deadliest attack in Baghdad since the height of sectarian war during 2006-2007. ISIS detonated two smaller VBIEDs in Sadr City one week earlier on August 5, killing six and wounding 22.



- Major Cities
- ✈ Airstrikes
- ☄ Ongoing Clashes
- 🚗 Failed S/VBIED
- 🚗 VBIED
- 👤 Demonstration
- 🚩 Coalition
- ISF
- ISIS

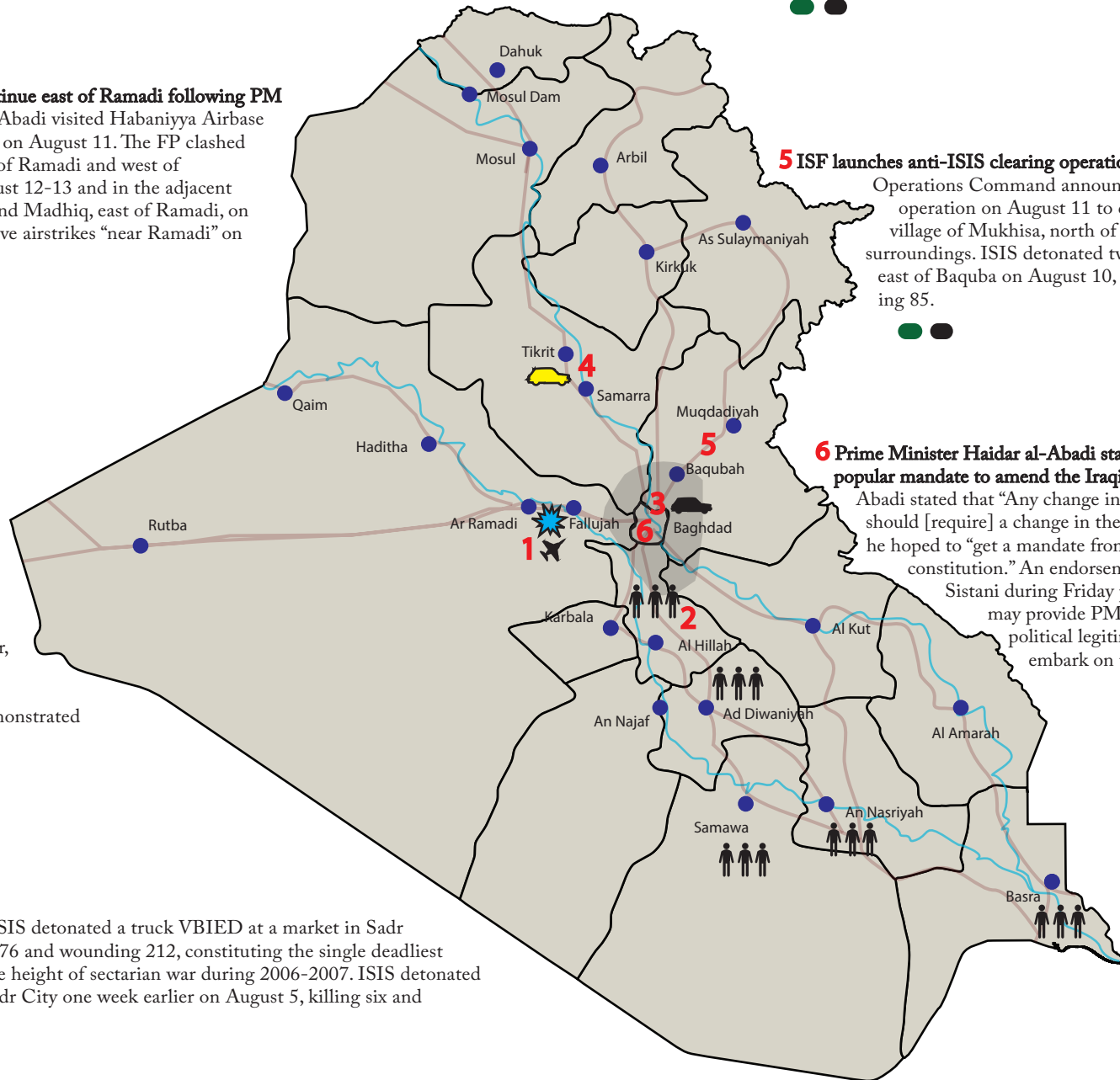
4 ISIS remains operational near Samarra. The Federal Police (FP) interdicted two suicide bombers and captured a VBIED in the Abasiya area, northwest of Samarra, on August 11. The Askari Mosque in Samarra, which Al-Qa'ida in Iraq (AQI) bombed in 2006, igniting sectarian civil war, remains a likely ISIS target.



5 ISF launches anti-ISIS clearing operation in Diyala. The Dijla Operations Command announced the start of an operation on August 11 to clear ISIS from the village of Mukhisa, north of Baquba and its surroundings. ISIS detonated two SVBIEDs north and east of Baquba on August 10, killing 55 and wounding 85.



6 Prime Minister Haidar al-Abadi states that he seeks a popular mandate to amend the Iraqi Constitution. PM Abadi stated that "Any change in the political process should [require] a change in the constitution" and that he hoped to "get a mandate from the people to alter the constitution." An endorsement by Ayatollah Sistani during Friday prayers on August 14 may provide PM Abadi with the political legitimacy and backing to embark on the task.



Content: Theodore Bell and ISW Iraq Team
Graphics: Evan Sterling



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Prime Minister (PM) Haidar al-Abadi is pushing ahead with his political reform initiative following the unanimous passing of his reform bill on August 11 by the Council of Representatives (CoR). He further stated his intent on August 12 to seek a popular mandate to amend the constitution. Ayatollah Sistani may again endorse PM Abadi's proposal to amend the constitution and provide further guidance on national and provincial reforms during his representative's sermon on August 14. Meanwhile, multiple southern provincial governments have announced the dissolution of district councils and the dismissal of governors' advisers in an effort to cut costs and address the demands of protesters over poor government performance. The Anbar and Diyala provincial governments have also announced the dismissal of governors' advisers as well as the district and sub-district councils. The Diyala provincial government stated that such reforms address protesters' demands, likely in an attempt to head off further protests; while the Salah ad-Din provincial government established a new bloc to carry out "reforms and reconstruction." The Anbar governor stated that such reforms were implemented in response to the demands of the Iraqi people for change, indicating that the Anbar government may seek generate pro-government sentiment and tribal support at a time when the ISF is engaged in an offensive in Ramadi. This restructuring comes amid PM Abadi's reform initiative as well as the implementation of the Provincial Powers Act on August 5 in accordance with the law's 2013 amendment, which devolves the powers of eight central ministries to provincial governments. Protests nevertheless continued in several southern provinces, including in Dhi Qar, where demonstrations occurred both in reaction to reforms considered by some protesters to be insufficient, and in reaction to dismissals of specific provincial government officials. The varying protests in Dhi Qar are likely political party driven. As such protests evolve in southern Iraq, provincial governments may be unable to react to emerging security concerns due to the forward deployment of many southern Iraq-based ISF units to Anbar and Salah ad-Din. Sustained attacks by ISIS in Diyala also demand the attention of the ISF, illustrated by the announcement of a new ISF clearing operation in Diyala following two SVBIED attacks earlier this week, continuing a trend that has been emerging since Ramadan. ISW previously forecasted that ISIS would attack Diyala to draw the ISF and Iranian proxy militias away from Anbar, but only Diyala-based ISF units appear to be involved in the clearing operations at this time. The interdiction of a VBIED north of Samarra during the reporting period may also indicate that ISIS intends to attack Samarra as another way to draw ISF and militia resources away from Anbar. The ISF or the Iraqi Shi'a militias may also be forced to re-secure northern Baghdad in light of three ISIS VBIED attacks in Sadr City since August 5, one of which was an extreme high casualty attack.